but when the sun came up

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/55583602.

Rating:
Explicit

Archive Warning:
No Archive Warnings Apply

Category:
M/M

Fandom:
Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid

Relationship:
Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov

Characters:
Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov, Rose Landry, Hayden Pike, Wyatt Hayes, Zane Boodram, J.J. Boiziau, The Centaurs Ensemble

Additional Tags:
Sexual Content, Developing Friendships, Domestic, Established Relationship, Anxiety, a love letter to shane hollander, [riverdale voice] the highs and lows of professional hockey, Slice of Life, Jealous Ilya Rozanov

Language:
English

Series:
Part 2 of like a bright new dream

Stats:
Published: 2024-04-30 Completed: 2024-08-16 Words: 21,726 Chapters: 4/4

but when the sun came up

by moonsock

Summary

Shane finds a new family in Ottawa. It just takes him a bit.

Chapter 1: the rest of the world was black and white

Chapter Summary

Shane is unchill.

Chapter Notes

two years ago i read game changers and immediately fixated on the uptight gay one with freckles so this has been a long time coming

title from out of the woods by tswift :) enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The season opener is against Montreal, because of course it is.

Shane pretends like he doesn't care, but obviously he does, and everyone in the locker room is torn between giving him a wide berth, like he needs space, or being overly affectionate, like he needs a distraction. (Barrett falls into the first category. Boodram, the second).

He doesn't need either– he needs to win. He needs to not close his eyes and see the look on his teammates' faces– *ex*-teammates– after game seven. He needs to shut the media up. He needs the eleven goddamn years he gave to the Voyageurs back. Months later, even thinking about it…

"What did that poor vegetable do to you?" Ilya says, and Shane snaps back. He looks down at the cucumber he's been brutally chopping, and the knife he somehow acquired. "Flirt with your husband?"

"Ha," Shane says flatly, though he does put down the knife. He doesn't want to practice unsafe habits– maybe the kitchen isn't the best place to let out his stress.

Ilya stares at him, in that eerily perceptive way of his, like he can see everything in Shane's head. He probably can. Shane doesn't meet his eyes, and tries to remember what he was doing. *Salad, right.* Then, in case Ilya actually can read his mind: *I'M FINE.*

"You are stressed," Ilya notes, ignoring Shane's attempt at telepathy.

“Obviously,” Shane says, a little petulantly. He can’t help it: these conversations always follow the same formula. Ilya makes a bland observation, poking the bear, then Shane gets snippy, and then somehow it ends with him snapping and spilling his guts and also probably crying. It’s predictable, and most definitely about to happen.

“Well, you are always stressed. That is just you. But do you want to tell me why you are taking it out on our lunch?” He says it like he can’t make his own damn salad.

“Why do you think?”

Ilya raises his eyebrows, and Shane sighs. “Sorry. I know I’m probably, like, annoying right now.”

“Yes. But I don’t mind. You are usually annoying.” Ilya shrugs at the glare Shane levels him with. "What? Is true. And I love you anyway, because I am a good husband.”

“You’d be an even better husband if you make the dressing for me.”

Ilya grumbles, but he does get out the olive oil. He is, after all, a good husband. And then, because he’s also the worst, he stands there and stares expectantly at Shane.

“I don’t want to talk about it,” Shane says, avoiding eye contact. He’s done with the cucumber.

“Okay.”

“Seriously, I don’t.”

“Got it.”

Every once in a while, Shane gets really lucky. Like now: his phone starts ringing from the counter, and he practically lunges for it.

“Hey Mom,” he says. “Oh, you’re coming over?”

“You are dodging!” Ilya accuses, a heated whisper. Shane sticks his tongue out at him and wanders into the living room.

“That’s great, Mom. No, I’m not doing anything.”

From the kitchen, Ilya flips him off with one hand, mixing the dressing with another.

His mom chats with him for a few minutes longer before he hears her car start, and then it's just a waiting game. He sits on the couch, staring into nothing. The stress of the past month suddenly has an unbearable weight.

He feels more than hears Ilya's presence behind him, and blindly reaches out a hand. His husband's big, calloused one takes it, fitting together perfectly.

"I won't push," Ilya says, dropping a kiss to Shane's shoulder. "I just do not want you to wear yourself out."

"Please," Shane says, dryly. He squeezes Ilya's hand tight, once, then lets go. "When have I ever done that?"

-

The Centaurs are a good group of guys, and Shane likes them.

He's just not sure how to make them like *him*.

He'd played with the same teammates for more than a decade, and outside of a few trades and the starstruck rookies, he's always had a solid group who knew him, loved him, followed him.

This group follows Ilya.

Shane's always known Ilya to be a natural leader. People gravitate to him; he knows firsthand what it's like to be caught in Ilya's orbit, the high of having his attention, wanting to impress him. And he knows that Ilya's less a man of words than he is one of action, that he gives his all, that he hates disappointing people. He's a good captain. The problem is, Shane can't really see him as *his* captain.

He's so used to challenging Ilya– not just in hockey, but outside of it, too. They work really, really well together, and Shane loves being on the same team, but he's always been Ilya's equal, whether they're competing or partners. He doesn't know how to listen to Ilya like this, and he doesn't know where he fits in the team dynamic. When does suggesting something become overstepping? Or disagreeing? Will Ilya let him get away with it because they're married? Will it lead to resentment from his other teammates?

"Jeez, Hollander," comes a friendly, booming voice from in front of him. "You look like you're thinking pretty hard!"

Shane lifts his head to meet the eyes of Harris, the communications guy Ilya likes so much. From his angle of sitting, the guy towers over Shane. When he stands up to shake his hand, he realizes Harris is a few inches shorter.

“Not that hard,” Shane says, a little embarrassed that this keeps happening to him. The Centaurs need him focused, not lost in his thoughts. “How have you been?”

Harris gives him a blinding grin. “I’m doing great, thanks! Turns out a promotion does wonders for your mood!” He punctuates this with a loud laugh, so sudden Shane almost jumps. “Nice of you to come in on an off day, though. Mind if I get a few pics of you when you’re out there?”

Shane nods. “Yeah, no problem. And, um, most of the team is coming. I’m just early.”

There’s a knowing look on Harris’s face. “Season opener, I get it. And I mean, Montreal– talk about an unlucky draw. But I know these guys, and from what I’ve seen you’re a pretty okay hockey player. You’ll do great.”

“Thanks, Harris. I appreciate it.” He knows Ilya likes the guy, and he did pick their first dance song at his wedding. And he really does appreciate how welcoming the management and staff has been, Harris one of the more notable ones.

“Are you leaving me for Harris, Hollander?” Ilya says as he enters the locker room. They’d driven to the rink together, but Ilya’d stopped by the coach’s office for a few minutes. “I’m not mad, just disappointed. Though I cannot blame you. He is good cuddler.”

“Roz!” Harris greets, as Ilya slings a friendly arm around his shoulder. If Shane had a few inches on Harris, Ilya absolutely dwarfs him. “No need to worry about any infidelity, here. I’m very happy with my boyfriend, thank you very much.”

“I think you need a new joke,” Shane says to his husband, who looks extremely gorgeous for no goddamn reason. You’d think he’d be used to it by now, but no. Ilya stuns him every time.

“I like this one,” Ilya says. “Makes your face scrunch up. Do not worry, Hollander. I know you will never leave me.”

“Don’t tempt me,” Shane retorts, and that’s when the rest of the guys

start filing in. He's pleasantly surprised at the turnout: this is, afterall, not a mandatory practice day. He exchanges nods with some (Barrett), friendly claps on the back from others (Hayes), and a bear hug from Bood; and then they're on the ice and Shane doesn't have to think anymore.

He never does, with hockey.

An hour later he's sweaty, sore in a good way, and adding to the list in his head of things they need to work on. There's a lot of talent here. They just need to hone it. They've been gelling in the pre-season, but if that will translate to when it matters, he doesn't know.

He turns, instinctually, to tell Hayden this, and starts when it's golden curls instead of short blond hair. Ilya gives him a questioning look and he shrugs, sheepishly.

"I was kind of expecting Hayden to be there."

Ilya makes his Hayden Pike face, which Shane is pretty sure is unconscious. He thinks the dislike between them is silly, all things considered, but progress has been made since the wedding. They don't, like, yell at each other anymore.

"I am offended. Why are you thinking about him when you could be thinking about me?"

"Wow," he laughs. Ilya always teases him, but he's more flirty than usual today, eyes sparkling and lips turned upward like he knows something Shane doesn't. The gap between them shortens. "What a line. Has it ever worked for you?"

"Is working now," Ilya purrs, and leans in.

Shane flinches back automatically, then looks around to see if anyone was paying attention. No one's even looking in their direction. He clocks the hurt in Ilya's eyes, quickly replaced by forced indifference, and guilt floods through him.

"I- sorry," he says, and grabs Ilya's arm. *Jesus, Shane.* "Sorry. Just maybe not in the locker room, okay?"

Ilya is quiet for a beat, and Shane braces himself for a whispered argument. "Okay, moya lyubov," he says instead, softly. The guilt rises.

There's an awkward moment, and then Shane goes back to unlacing his skates, wishing the ground would swallow him. His life is perfect and he still finds ways to fuck up.

"Some of the guys are going out to the bar," Ilya tells him a minute later. Easy like nothing happened. "Will be casual. Not too much drinking. Do you want to go?"

Shane weighs the pros and cons. There's more pros: low stakes, a little alcohol (nothing crazy before their game in five days), and team bonding. "Sure," he says, and the delight on Ilya's face is immediately more than enough reason to go. "You can buy me a beer."

"So I am driving home, then?"

"I'm not going to get blasted off of *one beer.* But, if you're offering…"

Ilya gives him an indulgent smile. "We will see, podushka."

"…Pillow?"

"Da. Because you will need it after your one drink."

Shane sighs, long, but it's an effort to keep his lips from twitching up into a smile. "You're a dick."

His husband shrugs. "You like it."

Unfortunately enough, Shane does. He really fucking does.

-

Wyatt Hayes is not what Shane had been expecting.

"Now the fourth movie," the goalie is saying, "well, that's when it really starts to pick up."

"Oh, yeah," Shane says. Contrary to what Ilya had baselessly accused him of, he is not drunk off of one beer. Only, like, a little tipsy. He doesn't drink all that often, even after the diet, and sometimes it takes him by surprise. "I remember that one. There's, like, the aliens. And the hospital is on fire."

Hayes visibly perks up. Shane imagines a tail wagging. "*Yes,* dude! The hospital scene is where we see the first hint of development for Strange. Super underrated in my opinion."

Shane scours his brain for anything else he can remember, but he and Ilya had only watched about a fourth (in support of Rose) before hands had started wandering. Based on the smirk on Ilya's face, his husband is thinking the same thing.

Ilya sits next to him, lazily sipping a Shirley Temple with one of those fun, curvy straws. He looks good doing it, too, which Shane resents– *he'd* look like a fucking moron if he asked for a fun straw. "What else do you remember about the movie, Hollander?" he asks.

Shane glares at him; he knows, already, that he's blushing, but valiantly soldiers on. "Rose was fantastic," he says loyally. Which is true! Probably. She's fantastic at everything.

"I still can't believe you're friends with *Madame X,"* Hayes gushes. He assumes that means Rose.

"Yes, Shane loves Rose Landry very much," Ilya says, winking when Shane huffs. As much as Ilya loves to joke about his failed attempt at a relationship with Rose, Shane knows he legitimately likes her. He *also* knows that it still makes him jealous– case in point, the hand curling around his bicep. Enough to be played off as casual, but there nonetheless.

"Well, she's just the best," he says. "Smart, funny. Fucking beautiful." The hand squeezes tighter. Shane hides a grin into his drink, knowing Ilya's gaze is drawn to where his lips wrap around the rim of the bottle.

Ilya's suddenly in his space, mouth next to his ear. "And what does Shane Hollander consider beautiful?"

Shane tries not to inhale too noticeably; suddenly the only thing he can focus on is Ilya's hot breath against his neck. His lips are probably glossy, wet from his own drink. And that fucking straw.

Wyatt looks between them, then makes a face. "I'm gonna…go over there for a second," he says, sliding off the bar stool over to a table with some other guys. Ilya stays in Shane's bubble for a long, tantalizing second, before leaning back, releasing the hold on his arm.

"So you do not want me to kiss your cheek in the locker room, but you are okay with foreplay in the bar?" Ilya asks, faux-casually. "Are we going to fuck in the bathroom next?"

Shane sighs. "I'm sorry," he says in a low voice. He places his hand on

Ilya's thigh– nothing scandalous, just a grounding touch. “About before. I’m trying. I just…forget sometimes. That we’re not hiding. And I always want you to kiss me.”

Ilya leans into his touch, so that their faces are inches apart again. “Shane,” he says. “Is okay. No one cares. This team is very gay.” He treats Shane to his trademark smirk. “I know that you are desperate for me. Though I am getting a little tired of all the sorrys.”

God, Shane loves him. He leans forward slowly, then presses a lingering, intentional kiss to the hinge of Ilya’s jaw. “I can’t help it,” he says against Ilya’s hot skin. He can feel his pulse jumping, and rubs his nose against the stubble. “I’m Canadian.”

Ilya’s throat works for a second, and his voice is hoarse when he says, “Well, I forgive you. Because I am a nice husband.”

“How generous.” He captures Ilya’s mouth for a slow, sweet kiss, reveling in the fact that they’re married, and they can do this. *It’s okay,* he tells himself. *It’s fine*. He pulls away and laughs when Ilya chases it. “Now who’s desperate?”

Ilya’s eyes are a mix of heat and joy. “You are very mean, Shane Hollander. No one believes me when I say this.”

Shane tucks an errant curl behind Ilya’s ear. “Maybe because all you do is talk shit.”

“He’s got a point,” Troy Barrett says, somehow materializing next to them. He always looks uncertain, like he’s not supposed to be there. Shane tries not to let his face sour too obviously. “I think Harris and I are gonna head out. I just wanted to say bye before we did.”

“Alright, Barrett. Go kiss your boyfriend,” Ilya says, smiling when Troy flushes.

Troy turns to Shane, and there’s a stretch of silence.

“Barrett.” Shane nods in dismissal, and Troy turns to leave. To his credit, Ilya waits until he’s out of earshot to start shit, smiling that shark-smile. Shane’s already annoyed.

“Wow, you really hate him.”

“What?” Shane huffs. “I was perfectly polite.” A nice, normal nod goodbye. Good etiquette, not that Ilya would understand.

“Yes. Polite. You are very polite.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It means you are bad liar.”

“I don’t *hate* Barrett. He’s fine, or whatever. I’m glad you guys are friends.” And he is! He knows that Ilya confided a bit in Troy, back when they were hiding. He’s legitimately glad that Barrett was a shoulder for his husband to lean on. Just because he’s not sucking the guy’s dick doesn’t mean he hates him.

“What are we talking about?” Hayes says, returning with another beer in hand and Luca Haas. Clearly he deemed it safe to come back, now that the threat of Shane and Ilya eye-fucking is gone. Next to him, Luca looks sweetly nervous.

“How Shane hates Troy,” Ilya tells him, ignoring Shane’s indignant sputters.

“Ah,” says Wyatt, sagely. “Been there dude. Don’t worry, he grows on you. He’s a good guy. Little rough around the edges at first, but we love him.”

“I know that,” Shane says, glaring at his stupid husband. “I don’t hate him.”

“He is jealous,” Ilya stage-whispers, leaning off the stool as if to confide in their teammates. “Of his backhand. Is so sad.”

“I hate *you*, dickhead,” Shane snaps. He looks up to see Luca and Wyatt giving them twin looks of amusement.

“You know, it’s kind of perfect having you on the team,” Wyatt says, out of nowhere. Shane blinks up at him. “Rozanov used to blindly terrorize us, but now he’s so busy pulling your pigtails that he forgets we’re in the room.”

“Hey,” Ilya protests. “I am not terror. I am a joy to be around.”

“You kind of are,” Luca Haas says, then blushes furiously when Ilya squawks in betrayal. “I mean, well, you tease a lot. You are a very good captain, though!”

Shane laughs as Luca backpedals over the sound of Ilya’s exaggerated hurt. The buzz from his one beer (shut up, Ilya) has worn off, but he

still feels light. It's nice to just sit and listen.

They stay for another hour, rotating around the team but usually sticking near Wyatt. Shane likes him; his company is easy, and he doesn't mind talking to himself, which is great for when Shane tunes out and forgets he has to, like, socialize. At his side is Ilya, being his charismatic, terror of a self. And, Shane notices, never initiating too much contact. He lets Shane set the pace.

See, Shane thinks a bit triumphantly. *I can be observant. And introspective.* He's been working on paying more attention to things that Ilya does, and all the quiet ways he loves him. He's guilty of being unappreciative in the past, taking it for granted. He refuses to let it happen again.

"Alright," Ilya says after a while, and Shane blinks, jerking his head up from where it was resting on Ilya's shoulder. "Mr. Lightweight needs to get home. After his one beer."

"It was three," Shane hisses, flushing. He turns to the rest of the Centaurs, and clears his throat. "Um, thanks for having us, guys."

"Having you?" Bood says, eyebrows up. "Hollander, you're on the team."

"Right," he says, shaking his head. *Nice, Shane.* "Well, get home safe. Bye."

Ilya's goodbyes are much friendlier, back slaps and hugs and, in Haas's case, ruffling of hair.

As promised, he drives home, so Shane only complains a little bit when he gets his fingerprints on the window trying to smack a fly. He makes a mental reminder to wipe them when they get home, and then another one to restock the disinfectant.

"You and Hayes are getting along," Ilya says.

Shane hums, tiredly. "Yeah. He's nice. He does all the talking."

"That is Hazy for you. You did not talk much, anyway."

"Hey," Shane says, "I talked." A little bit– mostly about Rose. And then he basically fell asleep on Ilya's shoulder.

"You use your media voice," Ilya says. "Is very cute. But these guys

are not media."

"I'm sorry," Shane starts, raising an eyebrow. "Are you trying to tell me how to make friends? Because I did go to kindergarten. Graduated, even."

"I am telling you they are your teammates. And you do not have to pretend with them."

Not like you did before, he doesn't say. Shane hears it all the same.

"Let's talk about something else," he says, suddenly bitter, so Ilya pivots to make fun of his poor alcohol intake for the rest of the drive.

"You *are* a terror," Shane tells him, annoyed in that way only Ilya can make him.

"Give this terror a kiss," Ilya says, pulling into the driveway. Shane rolls his eyes, perfunctory, and leans in.

-

Dinner is his favorite time of the day. He loves this: working in tandem with Ilya, doing their own tasks separately and coming together to make something delicious. The kitchen has become a safe space for them. Plus, Ilya's always handsy when they're cooking. Hips bumping together, perpetually touching Shane: hair, neck, waist. He likes it, the quiet domesticity. He can't believe he's lucky enough to have it.

Tonight is chicken parmesan. It's Ilya's favorite, so he doesn't protest when Shane suggests it, but his narrowed eyes means Shane's been seen right through.

"I thought I said no more sorrys," Ilya says as he stirs the marinara.

"What makes you think this is a sorry?"

Ilya swats his ass, playfully, and Shane yelps. "*Okay*, fuck, it's a sorry. I told you I'm Canadian."

"As if I need reminder," Ilya says, returning to dinner instead of tormenting Shane's butt. "Plaid, everywhere."

Shane sets to work on the panko crumbs, ignoring the jab. Ilya loves the plaid throw; he always passes out on the couch under it. He squeaks as he's suddenly lifted into the air: Ilya's chest is pressed

against his back, strong arms squeezing tight. He laughs, delighted, and squirms happily when Ilya starts pressing insistent kisses to his neck. “Maybe you make it up to me in a different way.”

“Not before dinner,” Shane manages, but he knows his face is flush with joy. It always gives him away. “Later.”

Ilya kisses his cheek, right where Shane’s freckles are the darkest, then releases him.

“Okay, get back to your chicken,” he says, laughing when Shane hits his arm. “I’m all done with my sauce, but you are slacking. Shameful, Hollander.”

“Maybe if you would stop *distracting me*,” Shane says, pointedly. As if he doesn’t love it, doesn’t cherish every second of attention Ilya gives him. Even when he’s being a dick.

Ilya holds his hands up innocently, but he does let Shane finish. And later, when Shane plates their meals, he noses at Ilya’s temple in thanks.

Shane does a fist pump in his head when he takes a bite. It’s good fucking chicken.

Anya wakes up from her deep post-nap slumber to beg for food, despite the fact that she ate forty minutes ago. Shane heaves a sigh but indulges her, then pretends not to notice when llya does the same. She’s so spoiled, but he doesn’t mind. Her little doggy face is irresistible.

He doesn’t finish his plate, instead pushing it toward Ilya to let him polish it off. Ilya does so, and with gusto, but he does watch with eagle eyes as Shane eats the rest of the vegetables. Thankfully, he doesn’t say anything.

“Is it later now?” Ilya asks, hooking an ankle around Shane’s underneath the table; Shane’s whole body thrills at the simple, sweet touch.

He bites his lip. “It could be.” They still need to do the dishes.

Ilya looks fond. “Do we need to do the dishes first?”

Mindreader, Shane thinks as loud as he can. “You can take Anya on a walk?” he offers. “I’ll do them.”

“Thank you, moy lyubimyy.”

Shane falls into the task easily, grateful to have something to do with his hands, with this weird, buzzing energy he hasn’t been able to rid himself of. Even exhausted, it’s like his skin is too tight. He just wants to stop *thinking* for a second. When Ilya returns he doesn’t notice until hands wrap around his waist; he startles, then melts into the strong warmth behind him.

“Hi,” he sighs, as Ilya pushes his shirt collar aside to mouth at his neck. Sex and hockey: the only two things proven to take him out of his mind. Also, two of his three favorite things in life (the third, of course, being the 6’3 Russian man currently set on making him gasp).

Which he does, when Ilya’s hand sneaks up his shirt to start playing with his chest. He turns around to face Ilya, falling easily into him, meeting his lips for an overdue kiss. Ilya moans into it, his favorite sound, and the hand under his shirt moves to the base of his spine, teasing at the hem of his jeans.

Shane wraps his hands around Ilya’s neck, an encouragement, and smiles when Ilya takes the hint, grabbing under his ass and lifting until Shane’s legs wrapped around his waist.

“Bed?” Ilya murmurs against his lips, pressing their noses together.

“Hm,” Shane agrees, diving in for one more kiss. He loses himself in it for a second: the weightless feeling of being held in Ilya’s arms, the hot slide of tongue and teeth. Nothing compares.

Eventually, Ilya sets him down, and they make their way upstairs, to the bed, where Shane gasps and moans as his husband takes him apart.

“You are wound so tight,” Ilya says at some point, head between Shane’s thighs. Marks are already forming from where he’d spent long, long minutes sucking, everywhere but the place Shane really wanted, teasing until he was begging for it. The skin is rubbed raw from Ilya’s stubble. “Relax. I have you.”

“Please,” Shane whimpers, beyond the point of caring. “Your mouth, please. Fuck.”

“You will get it, sweetheart,” Ilya whispers, sounding a little wrecked. “Whatever you want.”

After, once Shane's come apart and is in the process of piecing himself back together, Ilya presses kisses to his neck, shoulders, cheeks, chasing the freckles; he's murmuring in breathless Russian, too fast for Shane to catch it.

"Tickles," Shane says, shying away from one of the lighter kisses. Ilya does it again, because he's kind of evil, and Shane squirms.

"Beautiful," Ilya says, mouth pressed against Shane's heart. He reaches up to grab a fist full of golden curls, playing with them mindlessly, captivated by the happy purr Ilya gives him.

When the stickiness has grown to be uncomfortable, Ilya gets up to grab a cloth; Shane blushes at the sweet attention when he's wiped clean. "I'm zonked," he says. Physically, he is. Mentally, his mind is whirring.

"I know. Sleep," Ilya says, and curls around him protectively. Automatically. Shane holds his hand where it's wrapped around his stomach, stroking his thumb over the soft skin. "I love you."

"Say it in Russian."

"Ya tebya lyublyu."

"Ya tebya lyublyu."

"Yes. Now sleep."

He tries, at least for a few minutes, but his thoughts are racing.

"Stop thinking," Ilya mumbles into his hair.

"I can't help it," he whispers. Then, quieter: "I want to beat them so bad."

Ilya's arms tighten around him. "I know. We will."

Shane closes his eyes, trying to ignore the doubts swirling in his head, the pressure from all sides. His jaw aches from clenching it. He focuses on Ilya's even breathing, inhaling the familiar scent of him, and waits for sleep to pull him under.

Chapter End Notes

shane: i love all my teammates equally
[earlier that day] i don't care for troy

thank you for reading!!!!!! comments and kudos keep me going <3

Chapter 2: built to fall apart (and fall back together)

Chapter Summary

They play Montreal, and Shane has feelings about it.

Chapter Notes

disclaimer: part of this is taken almost word-for-word from TLG epilogue/the centaur's home opener. it starts with "you know" and ends with "ilya smiles back" #dontsueme

enjoy!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Ottawa media is nice– maybe because they're so used to disappointment– but they're still the media.

"Shane," one of the reporters says, "What does Ottawa have to do to win tonight?"

He remembers, all too well, the number of times he had responded to some variant of this question in Montreal. The answer's always the same: score more goals than the other team. But of course no one wants to hear that.

By now he's perfected his "thinking" face. "Well," he starts, like he hasn't heard this a million times. "Stay physical, get shots off, and keep the defense tight. They're a tough team, but we're tougher."

"Is there any lingering animosity with the trade? How does it feel to be facing your former team of eleven seasons?"

Bad. It feels fucking bad. "Um, it's obviously, y'know, different being on this side of the ice. But…that's hockey."

They stare at him for a beat, clearly waiting for him to elaborate. When he makes no move to, the guy in front clears his throat. "Last question, Shane: what will it be like playing with Rozanov after years of competition?"

Shane knows it's a question they have to ask, but he hates it all the same. Like he's going to trash talk his fucking husband. Get a grip.

“Well, he’s an okay player,” he says, and the reporters chuckle obligingly. “I’m, um, looking forward to it. It’ll be different, but good.” Different, but good: story of his fucking year.

When they’re satisfied with his bland responses, he’s free to go, and on his way out he passes Ilya.

“They got you too?” he asks sympathetically.

Ilya snorts. “I am just surprised they didn’t make us do it together. First game as a married couple, first game we are not rivals. This is tame.”

Shane supposes that’s true. Ottawa media is annoying, but not bloodthirsty. He’ll take what he can get.

“So tell me Ilya,” he says, adopting an overly-serious voice and thrusting a fake mic in his husband's face. “What will it be like playing with Hollander?”

He’s expecting a quip about scoring more goals, or having to share the ice with an attention-hog. He’s *not* expecting Ilya’s expression to change into something fierce, an unsmiling promise.

“It will be fucking amazing,” Ilya says, not breaking eye contact. “And we will be unstoppable.”

Shane swallows hard. “I love you,” he blurts, despite the fact that they’re in the hallway, people passing them by. The world narrows to the green-gold of Ilya’s eyes, the slight clench of his jaw.

“I love you, too. We’re going to kick Montreal’s ass.”

Shane gives him a quick kiss, and doesn’t even look around to see who might have witnessed it. “Now go tell them that.”

By the time Ilya returns to the locker room, Shane’s fully dressed. It’s still kind of weird wearing the Ottawa sweater. The logo is so fucking stupid.

“They asked me about your tripping,” Ilya tells him, face sour.

Shane tries to ignore the swooping feeling in his stomach, the automatic hurt. Whatever. He’d hoped those stupid rumors would have died down by now, but they’re playing *Montreal*. The media wants their soundbites, and they have a hard time letting a rivalry go.

Clearly.

“What’d you say?” he asks. The look Ilya gives him is irritated.

“What do you think? Is disrespectful to my game, to yours. And once we almost broke up over Uno, so whoever thinks you let me win has not been paying attention.”

“You play it wrong,” Shane huffs.

“Is fucking Uno. That’s the point.”

“Whatever.”

He’s antsy– ready to play. The day, so far, has been perfect: he’d kissed Ilya awake, ate breakfast outside, had lunch with his parents. He wants to end it on a good note. He wants the ball of dread that he’s had in his stomach for the past month to dissipate. He really, really wants to win.

He blinks, and they’re about to line up for their introductions.

“You know,” Shane says. “The last time I was at an Ottawa Centaurs home opener, I was twelve years old.”

“You look good,” Ilya says, looking down at him. The added height of his skates make him a giant. “Even with that stupid logo.”

Shane glances down, pretending to be offended despite the fact that he’d been thinking the same thing. “It’s growing on me.”

“Liar.”

“Stop flirting and get in order,” Bood says with a smile. “Shane, you’re supposed to be way up there, between Luca and Tanner.”

“Yes,” Ilya says solemnly. “The back of the line is for captains.”

Shane glances again at his own jersey, this time to the empty space on his left chest. “Right. Not used to not having that C.”

“Get used to it,” Ilya says, tapping his own C. “This stays right here.”

Shane gives him a mocking salute, then makes his way up the line. When his name is called his hometown bursts into cheers, an excited roar. He will never, ever get tired of that sound.

A few minutes later Ilya rockets out onto the ice and completes the circle at center ice. Shane stands directly across from him and shoots him a grin. Ilya smiles back.

Game fucking on.

-

The past few months have been grueling enough on his psyche that Shane somehow forgot the fact that he's good at hockey. The best, actually.

They trounce Montreal.

He has a hand in every goal– one of his own and two assists– and when Ilya gets a beautiful top shelf goal in the final minute, he's not thinking at all as he throws himself into his husband's arms, slamming them both against the glass.

"*Fuck yes*," he yells into Ilya's neck. He already wants to break his No Kissing On The Ice rule. It's only one goal, but he celebrates like it's the fucking Stanley Cup.

Ilya's not even saying words, just shouting incoherently into Shane's ears. Their teammates crash into them seconds later, and then the yelling grows tenfold, echoed by the screaming crowd.

The energy locker room is ecstatic, a pulsing, living thing. It's sweet, he thinks, that the Centaurs are also celebrating like they just won the fucking cup. Wiebe's post-game speech is complimentary; Ilya's, profanity-laden. Shane talks to the reporters and doesn't remember anything he says. He feels like he's floating.

They carry the high an hour later into the bar, and Shane manages to text his parents back, plus shoot Hayden a nice, sober **Good game bud**, before he's being ordered to chug.

He's woozy after one shot, hammered after four. Dykstra keeps buying him another round, and he's not sure whose arm is around his shoulder but it's not Ilya's. Usually he'd pace himself, but– fuck it. His new team, captained by his *husband*, just beat the Montreal Voyageurs in the home-opener. And he scored! And so did Ilya! It feels like a fairy tale. He's so happy he doesn't even know what to do with himself.

"I'm so happy I don't even know what to do with myself!" he tells

Dykstra, who looks amused.

“Holly, you’re wasted,” Dykstra says. Which, like, hypocritical. His eyes are crossed and his snapback he somehow acquired is backwards, in danger of falling off. “It’s your turn to get the drinks.”

Shane definitely should not be getting another drink. But… he wants these guys to like him, and also Dykstra did get the last four rounds. He sighs and goes up to the bar.

“We’ve got to stop meeting like this,” Wyatt says from next to him. Shane turns to look at him and the room spins.

“Like what?”

Wyatt looks him up and down. “Nevermind, dude. Where’s your better half? Or worse, I guess. I go to the bathroom for one fucking minute and he disappears.” He pauses. “Okay, fine, ten minutes. Lisa called.”

Shane points to where Ilya and Chouinard are arm wrestling. His aim isn’t the best, though Wyatt seems to get the gist. They both watch in silence as Ilya struggles, ultimately wins, and immediately starts making fun of Chouinard. His arms are so big. Like, so big.

“I bet you could beat him,” Wyatt says to Shane.

“I know what you’re trying to do,” Shane says, slurring a bit, “and I don’t care. Challenge accepted.”

A minute later he sets the tray of shots down and is met with raucous cheers. Shane shoots a stern look at a slumped Luca Haas in the corner of the booth. “Not for you, kid. You’re cut off.”

Dykstra whoops and ruffles Shane’s hair. “Our hero,” he proclaims. “Do the next one with me?”

Shane reaches around to flip his hat the rest of the way off. “They’re all yours. I have to go beat my husband now.” He says it giddily, in front of all these hockey guys. *Husband.*

“Come to cheer me on?” Ilya smirks up at him from his seat when Shane wanders over. “I am undefeated.”

“I beat you, asshole,” Bood says from across the booth.

“Doesn’t count,” Ilya says immediately. “Was before we started keeping score.”

Shane wraps his arms around his husband's shoulders and leans heavy on him. Ilya's face looks sharper at this angle, less flattering. Shane still wants to kiss him. "Wyatt says I can beat you."

"Wyatt is an idiot," Ilya says as he presses his cheek into Shane's arm.

"I don't know, Roz," Boodram says. "My money's on Hollander."

"See?" Shane murmurs in Ilya's ear. "Now scooch." He pushes at Ilya's shoulders, and only blushes a little when he's dragged half into his lap. Self growth, and shit.

Ilya grins at him, all teeth. "You are super drunk."

"No," Shane protests, trying to ignore the heat pooling in his stomach. Why does Ilya have to look at him like that? "I'm normal drunk." *God*, his arms. And his eyes. And that fucking smile…

Ilya's face tells him that he knows exactly what Shane's thinking about right now. "You ready, Hollander?" His accent is thicker when he drinks.

Shane squares his shoulders, determined. "Bring it, Rozanov."

He loses. Obviously, he loses, because his husband has biceps like fucking boulders and he can't stop staring at them.

"Okay," Ilya says, after the third time Shane's challenged him and lost. "I think you give up now."

"*You give up*," Shane grumbles. But he does stop, begrudgingly. At least now he gets to relax against Ilya, gets to stare at him as long as he wants.

Ilya's always confident– he demands attention by just existing– but he's lazier with it when he's drunk, loose in an absurdly attractive way. Shane's heart flutters whenever he shoots him a cocky smile after winning, like they're in on the same joke.

He likes when Ilya shows off for him.

At some point, around two, maybe, they start filing out. Ilya, only marginally more sober than Shane, orders an Uber, and Shane shows extreme restraint in not making out with him in the backseat. After, they stumble up the stairs, collapsing in bed, and though he makes a valiant effort at keeping the spark alive, Shane can barely stay awake.

“Why are you still trying to kiss me?” Ilya laughs when Shane’s eyes close for the third time.

“We beat Montreal,” Shane says. It explains everything.

Ilya smiles at him, and tucks a strand of hair behind his ear. “I know. Was awesome. Let’s go the fuck to sleep, okay? We can celebrate tomorrow.” He flips them so Shane’s head rests on his chest.

“Remind me to blow you in the morning,” Shane mumbles, pressing his face into Ilya’s pecs.

He feels Ilya’s chest shake when he laughs. “Sure, Hollander.”

“Ilya,” he manages, fighting to keep his eyes open. This is important. He feels like he’s in a boat at sea, swaying back and forth. “I love playing with you.”

He doesn’t hear whatever Ilya says in response; his vision, still spinning, darkens, and he falls asleep to the feeling of hands carding through his hair.

-

Morning finds him with his head in his hands, groaning.

“I guess this means no blowjob,” Ilya says when he sees Shane slumped at the kitchen counter.

“Hmpph,” Shane says, eloquently. He opts to lay his cheek against the cold granite. When he peeks an eye open to look over at his husband, he sees Ilya isn’t faring much better. He has a line of drool on his chin, and pillow marks on his temple from his watch.

“Nice hair,” Shane says, because it looks horrible. “How are you feeling?”

Ilya flips him off, then starts ransacking the cabinets for advil. Which kind of answers his question. “Better than you.” Shane wordlessly slides him the rest of his coffee.

Ilya takes it and downs three pills. “You want breakfast?”

He thinks about eggs and shudders. “No.”

“You need to eat. Soak up the alcohol.” There is a *lot* of alcohol to soak up, if the way he’s feeling is any indication.

“I hate myself,” Shane says. He hasn’t drank like that since…well, since their wedding. Svetlana had given them, in Ilya’s words, “real vodka” from Russia.

Ilya’s big hand settles on his neck, comforting. He’s always touchy in the kitchen. “You can barely handle one beer. No idea why you did a million shots.”

Shane doesn’t even bother refuting it. If he does drink, he prefers beer– or, if they’re having a nice dinner, wine. He’d spent maybe half of their honeymoon comfortably tipsy on Spanish wine, and it had been perfect. But yeah– not a shots guy.

“I want Dykstra to like me,” he explains. “And I was just so fucking relieved that we beat Montreal…but now I’m worried the guys are going to think I’m this, like, crazy party guy.”

Ilya has the nerve to laugh. He laughs harder at the glare Shane shoots him. “No one who has ever met you is going to think that. And you are a cute drunk. Is nice when you let go.”

Let go is an apt description. Shane vaguely remembers arm wrestling, and there is a huge chance he and Ilya made out publicly. He groans again. Jesus. The season just started and he’s already embarrassing himself.

Coffee finished, Ilya wanders over to the den and Shane follows, settling into the couch. He switches the TV to ESPN, where they’re playing highlights of last night’s game.

“I am going to shower,” Ilya tells him, rubbing at Shane’s ankle.

Shane makes a vague noise of acknowledgement, busy watching his on-screen self careen into Ilya. The camera zooms in on their hug. He smiles a bit, reliving the feeling of scoring on the same line as his husband. His smile drops when the screen cuts to a post-game interview with Gilbert Comeau.

“Have the roster changes impacted your play at all?” A reporter asks. *Roster changes*. Funny euphemism, Shane thinks. *Not.*

“Um, you lose guys every season. Get new ones, too. The lines aren’t clicking yet but we’ll get there. This is just one game.”

“One more, Gilbert: what was it like facing former teammate Shane Hollander tonight? You played together for a decade. There must have

been a lot of emotion there."

Comeau's face tightens a bit. He takes a second to respond. "Uh, no. No emotion, no. He plays his game, I play mine. I think-"

Shane doesn't hear whatever Comeau thinks, because he turns the TV off before he can hear the rest. *No emotion*. They didn't even look at each other on the ice. The only time anyone other than Hayden or JJ acknowledged him, it was to slam him into the boards. Or, in Drapeau's case, spit curses at him after he scored.

Comeau had been his friend, once. They used to watch movies together on flights, trying to see if they could start them at the exact same time to sync up their screens. Shane would always be a half-second early. When Shane was chosen as captain, Comeau was the one to buy him a congratulatory beer.

He never responded to the wedding invite.

"Shane?" Ilya stands in the entryway. He doesn't know how long he's been sitting there, but apparently it was long enough for Ilya to shower. "Are you going to throw up?"

"No," Shane says. "No, I just…" He feels his throat get tight and his eyes get hot, unbidden. *Fuck*. "I used to call him Gills."

And then he bursts into tears.

The couch shifts with Ilya's weight as he sits down next to Shane, pulling him into his chest. Shane curls into him, and that horrible tight out-of-skin feeling he's been fighting for the past eight months finally snaps.

"They didn't even come to my fucking wedding," he says wetly. "Do you *know* how many weddings I went to? A fucking lot. For guys I didn't even know that well. They all know me. And they still didn't come."

"Sweetheart," Ilya says softly. He sounds heartbroken. Shane can't bear to look at him, not right now, so he keeps his eyes closed tight and feels his body wrack with sobs. It's a long few minutes before he collects himself.

"I loved them," he says, miserably, after the tears have mostly stopped streaming. He takes a shuddering breath. "And they were always gonna hate me. It doesn't matter that I tripped. The moment I fell in

love with you they were gonna hate me."

Ilya rocks him back and forth, a little, and he allows himself exactly one minute before carefully disentangling himself from his husband's arms. Ilya makes a low noise when he lets go.

"Jesus. Sorry," he says, slowly exhaling. His head hurts. "Sorry. I just…I don't feel great, and then I saw the interview and…I don't know. He didn't even say anything *bad*. I don't know."

"Is okay," Ilya says, gently stroking Shane's knuckles. "You've been so stressed. This is good. Is um…what is the word?"

"Cathartic?"

"Yes."

Shane wonders if that's Ilya's therapy talking. He wants to ask, but doesn't. "I'm always stressed," he says instead, sniffing. Ilya gives him a fond look. "It's been a hard year."

A good year, undoubtedly– he got married, honeymooned, joined the same team as his husband. And beating Montreal is…God, it's the best fucking *I told you so* there is. But also– he'd thought he was going to retire there. He used to picture his jersey in the rafters.

"I know this came out of nowhere," Shane says, as his husband wipes his cheek. "Sorry to, like, unload all this on you. We had such a fun night and I'm being a buzzkill."

Ilya raises an eyebrow, a little condescendingly. "Came out of nowhere? I have been waiting for this. You have been like a bomb."

Shane hits him on the chest, right over that goddamn bear tattoo. "I'm not a fucking *bomb*, Christ." But, he admits privately, it was probably incredibly obvious how well he was taking things.

"You have taken everything very well," Ilya continues, because he's a mindreader, "but you are still you. You needed a freak out."

He mulls that one over, and decides Ilya is probably right. It's out of his system, for the most part. The hurt might linger but at least he doesn't have to pretend like the transition to the Centaurs is going to be seamless.

"Ugh," he says. "I got snot all over your shirt. I'll wash it in a second

when I do the sheets." He wipes at the fabric, fruitlessly. He can't remember where he put the TidePen.

Ilya's silent for a moment, and then he bursts out laughing. Shane stares at him in bemusement. "What?"

"You just had a breakdown, and now you want to do chores," Ilya chuckles. He murmurs something quickly in Russian. "I love you. You are the best buzzkill."

"Fuck you," Shane says, but he's smiling. No one makes him smile more than Ilya. No one else makes him this happy. "I'm hungover and sad. Leave me alone."

"No," says Ilya, unrepentant. He kisses Shane's nose. "Let's make breakfast. You need food."

"Hm," Shane agrees. His brain hurts, a little, from the sudden swing in mood. Sad to happy to overwhelmingly grateful he has this man in his life. "I love you too, by the way."

"You invited Hayden Pike to our home," Ilya says wryly. "Clearly you do not love me that much."

-

Seeing Hayden's face, even for a three hour window, lifts Shane's spirits considerably. JJ standing behind him is an added bonus.

"Hey, guys," he says, leaning into the hugs (if he's the last one to pull away, that's his business).

"Come in! We just made lunch, if you want some." He tries to ignore the way JJ's smile dampens at *we*.

"Great. I'm fucking starving," says Hayden, predictably. "Also, did you have to beat our ass like that? Not cool, man."

Yes, Shane thinks. He's this emotional after a *win*- he doesn't even want to think about if they'd lost.

"It's so fucking weird seeing you on the other side of the ice," says JJ. He'd been supportive of the trade, but understandably upset. More at Ilya than Shane, honestly. As if the evil Rozanov were stealing him away.

"I know," Shane says. He really fucking does. "But the Cens are a good

group. We're clicking."

Hayden snorts. "No shit, you're clicking. You and Rozanov on the same line is a terrifying thing."

"Just on the power play," Shane corrects. But he can't help the smug tone– yeah, he and his husband on the same line is fucking terrifying, and he loves it. Nothing is better than playing with Ilya– except maybe fucking him. And being married to him. And getting to love him forever, or whatever.

Ilya exchanges weird, territorial greetings with Hayden and JJ (it's interesting, seeing the height difference between them all) but mostly makes himself scarce when they go out to eat on the patio. Shane plans to thank him for that, later– the interaction could have been a lot worse, considering the blowout game. And he's feeling a little raw from his cry session, which Ilya undoubtably picked up on. Instead of thinking about that, Shane eats the sandwich that he totally aced and tries to appreciate the fact that he has two friends who still love him, after everything.

"I knew exactly where you were going to score from," Hayden tells him with a mouthful of bread and meat. He, at least, has always been complimentary of Shane's cooking (if you can call a sandwich cooking– which Shane does).

He snorts disbelievingly. "Oh yeah?"

Hayden stops chewing and meets his eyes. "Come on, man. I can read you. I could've made that pass to you with my eyes closed." It had been Dillon, surprisingly, who made the pass. Ilya had been kind of a bitch about it. "Who am I supposed to pass to now?"

He means it as playful, but it falls short. Both of them avoid the eyes of JJ, who shakes his head angrily. The silence grows sour.

"Some of the guys feel bad," JJ says, out of nowhere. Or maybe not; maybe it's obvious what they're all thinking about.

Desperately, Shane wants to ask who. He doesn't– if they want to see him, they'll see him. And clearly they don't.

"Not bad enough to call," he says, which about sums it up. Never bad enough to do anything about it.

JJ sighs. "Yeah." He takes a bite of his sandwich and looks away.

They don't talk about it anymore.

An hour later, they migrate back into the house, where Hayden takes a call from Jackie. Shane misses her, truly. He says as much into the phone, and is so caught up talking to her he barely notices Ilya's return and the subsequent stare down he and JJ have.

"Hayden misses you so much, Shane," Jackie says. She's on speaker now, and Hayden immediately starts sputtering. "It's basically all he talks about."

"It is *not*," Hayden denies.

"And I miss you, too," she continues, ignoring her husband. "I went to our coffee spot and Nose Ring Barista asked about you."

"Nose Ring Barista?" Ilya asks into the phone.

"Is that Ilya? Hi, Ilya!"

"Hi, Jackie," Ilya says charmingly. "Tell me about this barista."

"Nothing special," she says. "Just another instance where Shane doesn't realize he's being flirted with and I have to stand there awkwardly and watch."

Um, what? "I notice when people are flirting with me," Shane defends himself. He looks to Hayden for backup (he knows better than to look to his husband, who leaps at any chance to poke fun at him), but he's met with a guilty shrug. *Traitor*.

"No," Ilya speaks up, as Shane knew he would. He can't resist. "You notice when *women* are flirting with you. And then you run away."

"Okay, fuck you. Name one time I haven't noticed a guy flirting with me."

"Besides Nose Ring Barista?" Jackie says. "The guy at Auclair's."

"That journalist at the camp," JJ says.

"*Laurent*," Ilya mutters, like it's a curse.

"Literally any time we walk outside," Hayden says. "I especially love when they pretend I'm not there. It's awesome for my self esteem."

"You guys are full of shit," Shane grumbles, but inwardly he's

glowing, delighted that they're all getting along. Even if it's at his expense.

And, whatever. Ilya always tells him he's oblivious, which he *isn't.* So he hadn't thought it was weird that Nose Ring Barista always gave him a free muffin– he'd figured it was good for customer loyalty! Or the guy at the bar– he'd been distracted! And besides, what did it matter who flirted with him? He's been panting after the same guy since he was eighteen years old. Ilya has nothing to worry about. It's *Shane* who worries, who wonders when the day Ilya tires of him is coming. He knows Ilya loves him (is pretty confident about that, actually) but there's a part of his brain that can't help but think *what if?* Ilya's the fun one, and Shane's the wet blanket. He knows how this story goes.

Eventually, JJ and Hayden have to make the drive back to Montreal. Shane tries not to be too sad about it. He's grateful they even stayed behind to see him.

JJ gives him a long hug. "I'm gonna miss you, Hollander," he says.

Goodbyes hurt worse with Hayden. Shane loves living with Ilya, but he's always been within fifteen minutes of Hayden's house. A "bye" between them used to mean "see you tomorrow."

"I'm stoked for you, dude. You deserve to be happy," Hayden mumbles into his shoulder, resolutely avoiding eye contact. They've never been good at the whole "feelings" thing.

"I am," Shane says. "I mean, I want to be. I'm, like, trying."

And he is! He's trying so, so hard. He's gone out with the guys, he's been embraced by the fans. The only thing left to do is get himself to believe it.

They release each other, and Hayden's smile comes easy. "I love you buddy. See you in three weeks."

"We're going to kick your ass again," Shane promises.

"You can try," JJ smirks. "Tell your boy *fuck you* from me."

"Tell him yourself in three weeks," Shane says, grinning, and then he closes the door.

-

Hours later, he's in bed with Ilya, tracing idle patterns on his knuckles. It's been a long fucking day.

"I'm not *that* oblivious, am I?" he asks. Maybe he doesn't notice some things, but it's not like he can't tell when someone finds him attractive. He's just mostly indifferent to it.

Ilya snorts. "You are very good looking, moya lyubov. I think sometimes you forget this."

Shane feels his face get hot with pleasure. "You think I'm good looking?" he says slyly– no doubt at odds with the red of his ears.

"I think I have been obsessed with your freckles for the past twelve years." Ilya punctuates this by noisily kissing Shane's cheeks, then moving his hair to kiss the back of his neck.

"Well, I've had a crush on you for the past twelve years, so we're even."

Ilya purses his lips, eyes sparkling. "I know. Was obvious and embarrassing for you."

And then he lunges at Shane, flipping them so that he's looking up into Ilya's eyes, his beautiful, angular face framed by golden curls. He peppers Shane's face with light kisses, encouraged by the laughter it invokes. The laughing morphs into a low, bitten-off moan when Ilya moves to his neck.

"I loved your freckles," Ilya says, mouth hot. "And your little nose." He moves down to Shane's chest, sucking. "Your sweet eyes. You have always been so sweet for me."

"Ilya," Shane gasps.

"So expressive," Ilya sighs into Shane's stomach. He blows cool air onto the skin, and laughs when Shane twitches. Asshole.

"You're expressive too," Shane counters. Which he is– sometimes Ilya comes even louder than he does. It's always a victory, getting to see his gorgeous face contorted with pleasure, and hearing his noises. *Shane* makes him do that. *He's* the one that makes Ilya lose control.

Ilya pauses in his ministrations, then sits up. Shane sits up with him, suddenly worried. Had he done something wrong? Or was Ilya still not feeling great? His husband gives him a reassuring smile, and grabs his

hand. “Only around you,” he says, seriously, which is not the mood Shane had been expecting when they started kissing. “You get me. You are the only person I have ever let in.”

God. How did Shane manage to marry the most romantic man on earth? And what is with the fucking mood swings today? He feels like he’s experienced every emotion possible in a fifteen hour span. “Ilya,” he says, swallowing hard.

There was a lot Shane could have done better for Ilya. He could have listened, or learned Russian faster, or not been so selfish all the goddamn time. And he’s trying to do that, now: to know when to push, and when to back off, and when to be there to hold him. It still feels like he could be doing more. But at the end of the day, he is the only one who has the privilege of seeing these sides of Ilya. The soft ones, the sad ones, the sweet ones.

He searches for the words to express this: the appreciation of being the one Ilya chose to entrust with his secrets. In the end, he settles on, “I love you.” And again, in Russian.

Ilya smiles at him the way he always does when Shane attempts his mother tongue. “I love you too. Sorry to ruin the moment. Let’s get back to the sex now, okay?”

Shane laughs, startled. He thinks about how fucking lucky they are to have met. And how fucking lucky he is to have these freckles that Ilya apparently loves so much. Was *obsessed with*, even.

“What?” Ilya asks, suspicious.

Shane hums. “Nothing. It’s just cute how *obsessed* you are with me.”

“Am not," Ilya scoffs, despite providing evidence to the contrary not a minute ago.

“Um, are too.”

Ilya tackles him, again. “Am not.”

Shane rubs their noses together, and then grinds up against him. “Sure feels like you are.”

“Dirty, Hollander,” Ilya growls, crushing their lips together.

They stop talking after that.

-

Practices, Shane thinks, have been going well. The lines are clicking, mostly, and even though Shane isn't usually first line– he has to earn that– he gets enough minutes that his mother doesn't complain too much. He tries not to be too selfish with the puck, but sometimes, when he knows he can score, he doesn't bother.

"Man, fuck you, Hollander," Wyatt says good-naturedly when Shane slides it five-hole.

Shane laughs, and lightly taps his goalie pads. "Sorry, Haysey."

The whistle blows, and the new line cycles through. It's a good practice, all things considered. He's feeling better about his game, the team's game. This season will be a challenge, but Shane loves challenges.

"Hollander," he hears from behind him, once mostly everyone has cleared off the ice. It's Bood. "Mind if you stay back for a second?"

Shane smiles at him, though his heart is racing. Has he been *too* selfish with the puck? Is his line not clicking as well as he thought it was? "I was going to stay for a bit anyway." He likes to do solo drills for at least thirty minutes, which Ilya teases him about. *Rink rat*, he calls him. There's no point in trying to argue it.

"I know you were," Bood says. "You're pretty intense, man. I've heard the stories and all, but I didn't really believe Roz when he told me."

"Stories?"

Bood shrugs. "I don't think you win three cups without being intense."

Fair enough.

"What did you want to talk about?" Shane asks. They're completely alone now, save for a few dwindling fans who stayed to watch.

Bood's face is an easy going one. His laughter and smiles never feel cruel, or pointed. He'd accepted Shane to the team with open arms. Ilya had confessed to Shane, once, that he thought Bood should be captain over him. Shane had soothed him, but he can see now why Ilya might have that insecurity.

"I just wanted to tell you, straight up, that you don't need to hold

back with us."

Shane blinks. "Hold back?"

Bood raises an eyebrow. "C'mon, dude. I get that maybe coming to Ottawa wasn't ideal. Roz came for you, you came for Roz…my point is, I guess, that it doesn't matter why you're here. We like you either way. You're a great guy, and a phenomenal hockey player." He laughs, a little disbelievingly. "Like, the best. I fucking hated playing against you. Anyway- we don't bite. We want you here. I hope you want to be here, too."

Shane swallows, suddenly guilty. "I do want to be here. I promise. I just…well, I've been burned before. I didn't want to make the same mistakes I made with my last team, I guess." There's a long silence; they both remember, in perfect clarity, the shit storm of Shane's last team.

Bood holds his hand out to shake. When Shane accepts, he's pulled into a tight hug. "You won't, dude. I used to think Roz was the best thing that happened to this team. Turns out, it's his husband."

Fuck. "Thanks, Bood," he says, and he can't mean it enough.

He came to their wedding.

When he's walking back to the car with Ilya, he's asked what Bood wanted to talk to him about.

"Not much," he says. He slides into the driver's seat, then tangles their fingers together over the console. "Just welcoming me to the team. Again."

He looks over at Ilya to find him looking absurdly happy. He laughs. "What?"

Ilya shakes his head, beaming. "Welcome to the Ottawa Centaurs, Shane Hollander."

Shane beams back. "Happy to be here." And he means it.

Chapter End Notes

broke: i love you
woke: i love playing with you

i love shane because he is the most oblivious, no-thoughts-head-

empty guy while also overthinking everything ever. sorry for making him Go Through It this chapter (not really though).

as always, comments and kudos are the reason i'm alive! thank you for reading!

Chapter 3: two paper airplanes flying

Chapter Summary

Shane wants to prove himself.

Chapter Notes

apparently i'm incapable of writing a chapter without shane and ilya having at least one Serious conversation…i'm a slut for communication i guess

enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The best part about Rose coming to town, other than the fact that Shane gets to see her and hug her and remember how much he loves her, is that Ilya becomes absurdly clingy.

"I have to get ready," he says, half-heartedly trying to disentangle himself from his husband's arms.

"No," Ilya whines, dragging him back into the covers. Admittedly, Shane doesn't resist very hard. "Five more minutes."

Five minutes turns into ten, which turns into Shane grinding his ass back against Ilya's very interested front, which then turns into scrambling out the door and sending an apology text to Rose, who is blessedly also running late. They meet at the front of the restaurant he chose– he and his mom had been several times before, and it was intimate enough that he didn't think they would be bothered. Also, he's been craving sushi.

"I missed you," he says, hugging her tight. He really did– as much as they text, it's nothing compared to seeing her in person.

"I missed you more," she says into the curve of his neck. She smells, fittingly, like a flower. "Also, did you get mauled by a bear or something? I would have brought concealer."

"Funny," Shane deadpans. *Maybe* there's a hint of a hickey on his collar bone, but he's pretty strict on visible love bites during the season. "And you know how he gets."

Ilya and Rose got on like a house on fire, which was to say they loved teaming up on Shane and seeing how red his face could turn.

Rose, to her credit, just looks amused. “It’s kind of flattering. Like I’m going to steal you away in the night.”

“Why am I always the girl in these scenarios? And why do both of you forget I’m gay?”

She laughs, and holds his hand as they walk inside, where they are quickly ushered to a corner booth. Shane makes a mental note to tip well. “Believe me, Shane, I didn’t forget. Now, tell me about the team. *Everything*, not just the good stuff.”

So he does. He exaggerates a few of their characteristics, just to get her to laugh, but for the most part he’s perfectly honest about his new teammates as well as his role within the group.

“I think you’re underselling yourself,” Rose tells him as she pours soy sauce into the little bowl. “I haven’t been able to catch the games yet, but you’ve been on every highlight reel. And they do like you, Shane. It’s impossible not to.”

Shane tries not to think about the entire population of Montreal, who would loudly and hurtfully disagree. “Enough about me,” he says. “Now *you* tell me everything. And not just the good stuff.”

He already knows her career updates– they text, and also he has a Google alert for her name. He likes to know of her upcoming projects from the source before he gets the notification about it. It’s a race he rarely loses.

She tells him about her love life (“Abysmal,” she complains), and about her lunch with her incredibly pregnant sister-in-law, and then about her argument with her cocky coworker, who plays the leading man.

“He sounds like an asshole,” Shane says, and has a brief fantasy of punching the guy in the face.

“Oh, he is,” Rose tells him through a mouthful of salmon roll. “But we don’t care about him. Anyway, I have this premiere in a few weeks, for-

Enigma Effect, Shane thinks.

“Enigma Effect, that indie I filmed a while back. And I was wondering if you would come with me. It’s in LA, obviously, but I checked your schedule and you don’t have a game that weekend. You can say no, but-”

“Yes,” Shane says. “Sure, of course.” The idea of paparazzi taking pictures of him makes him want to die, a little bit, but he’s honored she asked and he wants to support her.

“Ilya and I can pick you out a suit,” says Rose, looking pleased. She and Ilya both largely ignore the fact that Shane still employs a personal stylist. “I’m thinking something blue for me, and I’ll make sure we match.”

Shane thinks about Ilya picking him out something to wear and his heart wobbles. For how indifferent Ilya is to most things, he cares very deeply about how he presents himself, clothing-wise. Personally, Shane thinks Ilya looks amazing in everything, but he’ll never argue against seeing him all dressed up.

He’s not sure what his face is doing, but when he looks up, Rose is gazing at him fondly.

“What?”

“He’s good for you,” is all she says.

Shane smiles wryly. “I’m glad you think so, because I already married him.”

Rose smacks his arm from across the table. “I mean it, Shane! You let loose around him. You need that…you can be so serious.”

“You mean I’m a stick in the mud.”

She shakes her head, glossy hair swaying perfectly. Sometimes Shane marvels at the fact that all of his favorite people are basically models. “*No*, I don’t mean that. You’re so hard on yourself. It’s great that you have someone to make you laugh.”

“You make me laugh, too.” He’s not sure why he’s arguing this. Yes, Ilya is good for him, and yes, he makes Shane laugh. Of course he knows this.

“Well, I’m actually funny,” she says with a winning smile. “Ilya’s just a dick, and you like it for some reason.”

They finish their rolls in less than ten minutes, but stay in the booth for another forty, catching up. One of the inconvenient things about living in Ottawa, Shane thinks sadly, is that Rose is usually filming anywhere but there– case in point, she drove down from Montreal to spend the day with him, but has to return in the morning. The schedule of a movie star is not for the faint of heart.

They both order mochi to go, and Shane leaves a generous tip– he refuses to let Rose foot the bill, despite complaints. They split at their respective cars to meet back at his house for the night.

“Miss Landry,” Ilya greets, kissing both of her cheeks.

“Mr. Rozanov,” she giggles. Shane feels like his heart is going to explode.

“I got you chocolate,” he says, showing Ilya the boxed mochi. “I hope that’s okay.” He gets a kiss to his temple in thanks. When he returns to the foyer after putting it in the fridge, Rose is excitedly telling Ilya about the premiere.

“You are going to be so awkward,” Ilya tells him the moment he’s within eyesight. “All the lights in your face. Maybe you hide behind Rose.”

“I will eat your mochi,” Shane threatens. “And I won’t be *that* awkward. I’ve done interviews before.”

“He’s going to memorize facts about the movie in case they ask him questions,” Rose says to Ilya in a stage whisper. “Calling it now.”

Well, of course he’s going to do that. The looks of twin delight on Ilya and Rose’s face when he doesn’t bother to defend against it is irritating, but weirdly endearing. If making fun of him is their love language then he can’t make himself hate it all that much.

It’s still annoying as fuck, though. “Leave me alone,” he grumbles, and of course they don’t.

The rest of the day is spent loafing around, save the hour Shane takes Rose through his yoga routine. She’s not the most flexible, but she’s fit, and he enjoys sharing the headspace with her. He loves doing yoga with Ilya, too, for the thirty minutes he’s game for it. Usually his husband gets bored about halfway through and stares at Shane’s ass for the remainder of the workout.

They watch a movie together ("*Not* X-Force," Rose says, with a warning look at Ilya), some stupid comedy that Shane snorts at a few times. Ilya's foot is in his lap and Shane presses his thumb into the arch. He's learned the hard way that Ilya's feet are incredibly ticklish, and the only way he can stand to have them massaged is if the pressure is hard and constant.

He likes knowing these things about Ilya.

Dinner is Caesar salad with chicken and a nice wine, because Shane knows how to impress a guest. Rose and Ilya are locked in a battle of who can tell the dirtiest story, which leads to Shane lunging across the table to physically block the words from coming out of Ilya's mouth, and Rose laughing so hard wine comes out of her nose. He adores her, but she knows too much about his sex life already.

The night ends with Ilya teaching them Russian card games. Shane is convinced he's making up rules on the spot to fuck with him ("You are terrible at this, Hollander," Ilya says, and Shane never wants to fuck him more than when he's gloating). Rose ends up winning, but seemingly by accident. Shane hadn't even known the game ended, and throws his cards down in bemusement.

Their time together, as usual, is too short. Before he knows it Rose is hugging him tightly goodnight, surprisingly strong for her small stature. His heart is heavy, but he tells himself he's been spoiled, anyway: Hayden and JJ and Rose all within a week. Too good to be true.

She pulls back to look him in the eyes, full lips turned downward. "Don't push yourself too hard, okay? I'm worried about you."

"There's nothing to be worried about," he says, and it actually sounds kind of convincing.

"No offense, but I can think of at least three things to be worried about. I love you. You can always call me."

"I know," he says. "Wake me up when you're leaving."

"I leave early."

"Wake me up anyway."

She kisses his cheek and opens the guest room door. "Maybe. Goodnight, Shane."

When he gets up in the morning– *early* early, enough so that Ilya doesn't stir– Rose is gone, and there's a box of green tea mochi in the fridge with his name on it.

-

He gets a text from Ilya on the way back from his run.

Rose posted your selfie on Instagram. Is cute.

Sweet in theory, but also, like, Shane's nightmare. He doesn't really *get* social media. His account is mainly PR stuff, and the occasional picture of Ilya and his family. He's a private guy; even before the outing, sharing his life with the world was the last thing he wanted.

Rose, though, is very active. She has millions and millions of followers; the post– a picture of them smiling together in his living room– has garnered hundreds of thousands of likes within the day. He looks genuinely happy, and of course she looks radiant.

Missed my guy! The caption reads, and Shane likes it. Then, because he figures he probably should, he comments with a simple heart. There. Instagramming done.

Except– rozanov81 has also commented. **Was this before or after you beat his ass in cards?** Shane huffs. Rude. She'd won by *accident.*

He clicks on Ilya's profile. The newest post– a few days ago– is of Anya, looking overjoyed with her favorite ball in her mouth. It's captionless, but it has Shane smiling fondly anyway. Most of Ilya's feed is random pictures without elaboration, but since their outing there's been a bit more context.

Case in point: a candid of Shane peeling a banana with the caption **He thinks I don't notice when he sneaks spinach in my smoothies.** Shane knows Ilya posts him, because he asks, but he never really bothers to check.

The next one: A yoga mat, captionless. Followed by a shot of the plaid throw (that Shane knows he likes), and a puzzle he and Dad had been working on. **Sunday night.**

And then: Shane, laughing with face in hands, visible skin pink and ears somehow redder. **мой помидор.** My tomato.

It has far more likes than any of the other photos, and thousands of

comments– some bad, but most supportive. He doesn't need other people's validation for him to have confidence in their relationship but…it's nice.

It is, he thinks, a collection of photos only he and Ilya truly understand. A love letter, of sorts– one seldomly read, considering how little Shane stalks him. He grins at his phone and texts Ilya a simple **I love you**.

Then he goes to tell him in person.

-

They started out strong with the win against Montreal, and then a win against Detroit, but the next three games are losses, an exercise in crashing and burning.

"*Fuck*," Shane spits in the locker room, Ilya brooding silently next to him. The rest of the guys are similarly morose, Wyatt in particular. Shane would usually go over, apologize for hanging him out to dry, but he can't make himself move from the bench, staring at his laces.

It wasn't even that they played *bad*. It just takes them so long to find their footing that by the time their passes are connecting they're down by two.

And Shane was fucking useless, of course. Four shots and nothing to show for it. He got a point off an assist, but considering they lost 3-1 it didn't do much good in the end.

"Shake it off," Wiebe is saying, and Shane knows it's early in the season but *God* this loss feels like a knife to the gut. Every season has its ups and downs– he's played hockey for his whole life, and he's learned this by now.

And yet.

"At least you got a point," Ilya says, when they're back in their Buffalo hotel room. "Boost your stats. I did nothing."

That's not the point, Shane wants to say. Ilya can afford a bad game, because after everything it's not his skill that's being questioned. The *point* is that he needs to prove that he deserves to be on this goddamn team, and that Montreal never should have let him go, and he can't do that if he can't score.

Ilya looks at him like he knows anyway.

When Shane doesn't say anything, Ilya steps closer, thumbing over his furrowed brows. "You are going to give yourself wrinkles. Stop fretting."

Shane knows he learned that specific word just for him, which is just a little embarrassing.

"I'm not fretting," he says, and sits on the end of the bed. Ilya stands in front of him, bracketed by Shane's legs. He looks ten feet tall like this, radiant despite the gummy hotel light. "It's just- *ugh*. Even when I'm really fucking good at hockey, it's still not good enough. And now I'm not even *good* at hockey, so I'm basically proving everyone right."

Ilya reaches down to tuck Shane's hair behind his ears. "If it is not enough either way, who cares? Just focus on your game, and they think what they want."

When he says it it sounds so simple. But of course it doesn't work like that. "I'm just so fucking sick of having to prove myself."

He finds himself suddenly on his back, staring up at his husband. Ilya has his shoulders pinned and a dangerous smile. "You do not need to prove yourself to me," he's saying, curls a halo, glowing gold. "You are Shane fucking Hollander, and I know exactly what you can do."

Well.

Blood rushes south so fast Shane goes a little dizzy, and Ilya's unforgiving hands moving from his shoulders to his wrists doesn't help.

He has a fleeting thought about the thinness of the wall– he really, really hopes Wyatt can't hear them– before Ilya's mouth is on his, swallowing Shane's moan.

"How do you want it?" Ilya asks, once they're naked.

"Like this," Shane pants, flipping them so that he's straddling Ilya's hips, cocks rubbing together in the kind of grind that has him seeing stars. "I want to look at you."

Sometimes, when Shane rides him, it's a power thing– him reducing Ilya to high pitched moans, controlling the pace. Other times, it's this– Ilya bouncing him ruthlessly up and down on his dick like he weighs

next to nothing, like there's no way off, the only way out is through.

He tries to look at Ilya, as promised, but once his husband starts fucking up into him, keeping his eyes open becomes an impossible feat.

"Shh," Ilya chastises when Shane lets out a particularly loud moan, because he loves torturing him. He sends another prayer in Hayes's general direction. "Quiet, Hollander."

Shane is *trying*. But every thrust gets a whimper out of him, and once Ilya starts stroking him it's a done deal, Shane's whines turning into a long, drawn out moan as he comes messy over his husband's clenched stomach. Ilya flips them until Shane's face first in the mattress; his rhythm changes, thrusting harder and uncontrollable into Shane's oversensitive body until he comes with a grunt, biting Shane's shoulder.

"God," Shane says, muffled by the pillow. He thinks he's drooling. "That was good."

"Just good?" Ilya asks, mock offended. He's out of breath, and Shane can feel his heart racing against his back, crucifix cold against his shoulder blades.

"Better than good," Shane amends. "Fucking great. Now get off me, I need to shower."

Ilya rolls off him, but drapes an arm over him so he doesn't get up. "Stay," he mumbles, flushed and beautiful. Post-coital Ilya, Shane reflects, is near impossible to ignore.

But. "I need to shower," he repeats. "You're, like, dripping out of me."

Ilya looks a little feral at that. He shifts so that he's pressing open-mouthed kisses down Shane's back, and farther, and then they're dirty all over again, Shane biting his own hand to muffle the noises Ilya Rozanov's fucking tongue get out of him.

Sorry, Shane texts Wyatt, when they're in the bathroom.

He gets the middle finger emoji in reply.

They don't actually fuck in the shower, even though Shane would have been up for it. Instead, he leans back against Ilya's chest, which gives him time to think about all the ways he's letting his new team

down. Ilya's silent, other than the occasional sweet nothings he murmurs in Russian, kissing behind Shane's ears or the top of his shoulders.

"Sweetheart," he eventually says, when they've been under the spray for ten minutes without speaking. "It will be okay."

Shane stares at the drain. "I know that."

"You push yourself…very hard," Ilya says after a second. "I love that about you. I am not trying to change that. I am just wishing that you don't hate yourself for making a mistake." They both know what mistake he's talking about.

Shane turns to bury his face in Ilya's neck, loving the scent of him through the nondescript hotel soap. "It was a pretty big mistake."

"Well, even second-best hockey players make mistakes." Ilya lets out a high-pitched shriek when Shane pinches his ribs. "Okay, *rude*."

"I love you," Shane tells him, smoothing over the pinch with his hand. "And I'm sorry we've had this conversation, like, four times now." He needs to get his shit together.

They step out of the shower and Shane finds himself being wrapped in a fluffy towel, while Ilya shakes his hair at him like a dog.

"Stop," he huffs, and captures Ilya's head in the towel, rubbing furiously until they're both breathless from laughter.

After brushing their teeth, they slide back into the bed; Shane's skin pebbles from the chill, and he plasters himself against Ilya, who seems to be perpetually running warm.

"Get your feet away," Ilya yelps when Shane runs his icy toes against his calf, so he does it again, thinking about how fucking grateful he is to be here to torment his husband.

Neither of them are very articulate– though Ilya, even with English as a second language, manages to beat Shane in that department. Sometimes Shane wishes he could just press their temples together and pour all of his thoughts directly into Ilya's brain. So many languages between them and he'll never be able to tell Ilya exactly what he means to him.

"I'm glad we met," is what he settles on.

He can feel Ilya smile into his shoulder. “I am glad you chose me.”

Which– okay. He *knows* Ilya means that Shane chose to love him, out of everyone. But he still remembers, in perfect clarity, that horrible day when Ilya asked him if he would choose hockey.

And worse, he remembers his hesitation.

“I’d still choose you,” he says, after a moment. “I’ll choose you every time. I just wish that…maybe things happened a little differently.”

Their outing had been one of the worst days of his life: an invasion of privacy from every angle, the loss of some of his closest friends, and his nightmare of a decade coming to fruition. But it happened, and they were okay somehow.

He tenses up when Ilya doesn’t respond. “Is that bad?”

“Is not bad,” Ilya muses, running a hand over Shane’s side. Shane’s relieved that he seems to be taking the topic change in stride. “Is normal, I think. To wonder. I wonder, like, what if you never stared at me like a creep in the shower. What then?”

Shane flushes. “I- shut up. You knew what you were doing. Flexing and..whatever.”

“Maybe I just wanted to impress the cute boy I liked.”

He thinks of that day, the commercial, and laughs. He’d been so confused, so curious about Ilya. Rozanov, then. “You hated me.”

“No.” A pause. “Well, yes. It was annoying.”

Shane can relate. He squirms, turning around so that he can swipe his thumb over Ilya’s cheekbone. They’d been so stupid, but they got here anyway. “*You* were annoying. All I wanted to do was play hockey and you were so…”

“Much better than you?”

“*Distracting*.”

Ilya opens and closes his mouth. He waits for his husband to find his words; not for the first time, he wishes his Russian was better.

“I loved you the whole time,” says Ilya, after a long moment. “I did not know where to put it. Or what to do with it. It followed me

everywhere."

Well, fuck. How does he even respond to that? He wants to cry, which is stupid. They're together now. What's the point of mourning the lost time?

"I didn't know." Except maybe he did, and he'd ignored it because he was scared.

Most of Shane's regrets in life could be boiled down to the fact that he was scared.

Ilya laughs. "Yeah. That was point. Anyway, what I am saying is you have always been my everything, even when I did not want you to be. And you do not need to prove yourself to me, because I know how amazing you are. And have always been. Okay?"

"Okay," Shane says, voice rough. And then, "I love you, too."

Ilya grins. "Except, not as amazing as Troy Barrett."

Shane grumbles and pushes him away, but his heart is glowing. He'd made the right choice. He'd make it again and again and again– anything to end up in this Buffalo hotel room, kissing Ilya Rozanov's gaudy bear tattoo goodnight.

-

The flight back to Ottawa is brief, no longer than an hour, and Shane sleeps it away, cozy in his favorite spot on Ilya's shoulder.

He wakes to the click of a camera, and Harris is squatting in the aisle, looking apologetic.

"Damn, I should've turned the ringer off. Sorry, Shane."

Shane blinks blearily at him. "It's okay," he says, even though he's not exactly sure where he is or what they're talking about, and he closes his eyes soon after.

When he wakes again they're back in Ottawa. Ilya drives them home in Shane's perfectly sensible car he complains so much about, and they take Anya out for a walk in the neighborhood.

It's a beautiful October day– sun shining, not too hot, hint of autumn chill around the corner. They have the next two days off, and a barbeque at Bood's tomorrow. Shane is nervous about it, despite his

like for the team. He's been to Bood's before, and it was nice. The idea of him having nowhere to escape to is less nice.

"Don't be nervous," Ilya says the following afternoon, unhelpfully. "And stop doing laundry. I want ribs."

"Who says I'm nervous?" Shane asks, refolding his underwear for the third time. Ilya takes it from him, gently, and places it in the drawer.

"Shane. They like you. Let's go eat a fuck ton of meat."

Bood's house is spacious, and the large driveway is full of cars. The moment they park on the street Shane can hear the raucous laughter of the Cens in the backyard.

"Roz! Hollander!" Dykstra greets the moment they step through the gate, holding a plate stacked with various meats. His hat is on backwards. Shane accepts the backslap and the hair mussing, but his mother raised him to always say hello to the host, first. He abandons llya to get drawn into a conversation about tattoos and sets off for Bood.

"Hey, dude," he says when he finds the man of the hour by the grill. "Sorry we're late. This all looks great."

Bood gives him a slightly exasperated look. "It started twenty minutes ago, Hollander. You're fine. And help yourself."

Shane grabs a few ribs, but most of his plate is for Ilya, who he can see looking longingly at the grill from where Dykstra has him cornered.

"No baby?" he asks, taking a tentative bite of cornbread.

"Cass's mom has Milo today," Bood explains, smiling fondly. "She's having a girls day."

"So you're having a boys day," Chouinard says, coming up from behind them. He starts piling his plate with seconds. "Taking advantage, I see."

"I don't hear you complaining," Bood says, and Shane smiles when Chouinard holds his hands up in innocence. "Beer's in the cooler, Holly."

"I'm good," Shane says. He's driving, and even if he wasn't he doesn't

want to be drunk every interaction he has with them outside of games.

Chouinard wanders off after getting his fill, and there's a silence.

Bood, of course, is the one to break it. "Roz didn't come to too many of these," he says, taking a sip from his beer. "It's nice having both of you guys."

"Why didn't he?" Shane asks, and Bood gives him a *duh* look in response. Oh.

Obviously he'd known that Ilya was missing things with the guys whenever he came to see Shane, but that doesn't stop the pit of guilt from forming in his stomach. He looks over to where Ilya and Dykstra are laughing themselves sick; he hates that he ever deprived Ilya of laughing like that.

"Speaking of," Bood says. "We should knock him off his high horse. He's looking a little too cocky today."

Shane smiles. "Just today?" Bood laughs and they walk across the yard together to where Ilya, Dykstra, and now Hayes stand.

"Moya lyubov," Ilya says when Shane hands him a plate full of ribs. "I am very glad I married you."

"So I can give you barbecue?" Shane asks dryly. "Thanks."

He lets the conversation wash over him, laughing at half the shit that comes out of his husband's mouth. If there's one thing Ilya Rozanov has, it's the audacity.

The backdoor gate opens and Troy Barrett's head peeks through, followed by Harris wearing a huge smile.

"Look who decided to show up," Wyatt says teasingly.

Ilya kisses Shane's cheek. "I am going to go say hi. You hold down the fort." *Hold down the fort* is his new favorite phrase, courtesy of Yuna. Last month it was *Bite the bullet.*

In the absence of Ilya, who tends to hold court whether he wants to or not, Shane can practically feel the attention swiveling to him. The conversation flows, though, and he's content to observe. Dykstra and Hayes are both chatty enough on their own. Hayes is texting furiously, and he lets out a laugh.

“You guys are sickeningly sweet,” Hayes tells Shane before shoving his phone into his face. On it is a picture of him and Ilya sleeping on the plane, posted on the Centaurs account– Shane’s head resting on Ilya’s shoulder, and Ilya’s head resting on Shane’s.

It’s a really fucking cute picture.

Ottawa’s power couple, someone has commented underneath.

“Ottawa’s first and second best players,” Ilya muses, appearing from behind him. Shane stomps on his foot.

“Bored of Barrett?” he asks quietly, and Ilya snorts.

“I missed you,” he says.

Shane flushes. “It was ten minutes.”

Ilya kisses his cheek. “Too long. Let’s go bother the rookie.”

“Terror,” Shane accuses.

Hours later, the food demolished and some of the younger guys gone to use their night off, they sit around the fire pit, the October night turned chilly.

Shane, again, finds himself participating less and watching more. He likes this team. He thinks that they also might enjoy his company. They keep inviting him to things.

“You good?” Barrett asks from next to him. He’s pretty soft spoken, surprisingly.

Shane kicks his feet up onto Ilya’s lap, staring at the cut of his husband’s jawline, the shadows on his cheekbones from the fire light. Ilya squeezes Shane’s ankle as he laughs at something Dillon says.

Shane loves him so, so much.

“I’m good,” he tells Barrett, thinking about his husband and the warmth of the fire and nothing else at all.

Chapter End Notes

> life becomes 10x better when i remember i can write about shane being happy and hanging out with his friends who love him because i am in fact the author

comments + kudos are treasured. thanks for reading!

Chapter 4: we were in screaming color

Chapter Summary

Shane settles in.

Chapter Notes

sorry this took so long i forgot what words were for a bit there

i, like ilya, am obsessed with shane's obedience. and i, like shane, am obsessed with jealous ilya. because of this, the final chapter ended up being a very horny one, with less plot than i would have liked. if it's a little out of character i blacked out when writing and can't be held responsible.

enjoy! and thank you for making it this far!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They win a game. And another one. And the next, and the next after that.

Predictably, the team is in great spirits, and no one more so than the Centaurs captain.

"What did I say? What did I tell you?" he asks Shane with a wide grin on their way to the parking garage. His hair is tousled, curls peeking out from under his toque. Shane's glad that he gets to see this handsome, smiling face every day for the rest of his life.

He's less glad right now. "Are you turning *my* goal into an *I told you so*?"

"Well," says Ilya, smoothly opening the door for Shane. "I did tell you so, yes?"

"No," says Shane, as he grabs Ilya's right hand from the passenger seat and starts playing with his fingers. "You did not tell me so. You mentioned it once. And if we're doing *I told you so*'s, I told *you* so about the dishes last week, and I didn't turn it into an *I told you so*."

"Whatever," Ilya scoffs, which means that Shane's right. "I think the goal should count for me. Coaching credit."

The *I told you so* in question refers to their game they just won, with both of them netting a goal. Ilya had said off-handedly to Shane that the goalie's left-side glove looked faulty. Shane's left-corner goal, despite what Ilya might claim, had nothing to do with the advice.

"Or I'm just good at hockey," Shane shoots back.

Ilya pretends to think. "No, it cannot be that one."

Shane hits his shoulder. "You're so full of shit." He laughs when his husband turns to wiggle his eyebrows at him. "Eyes on the road, Coach Rozanov."

They're both in good moods, though a little wiped from the plane ride back from Philly after their matinee game. Shane anticipates sleepy blowjobs and an episode of their current show before they pass out.

That's what ends up happening, for the most part– they're halfway through the episode when Shane's hands start playing with the drawstring of Ilya's sweats– until his phone rings from the table.

"Ignore it," Ilya says, nudging his hips up. Shane shoves them right back down and disentangles himself, reaching for the phone. What he sees on the caller ID gives him pause.

"It's Comeau," he tells Ilya.

Ilya stares at him. "Why?"

"Well, I don't know! Should I answer?"

His husband shrugs, noncommittal, which is about the least helpful thing he could do.

Thanks for nothing, Shane thinks, and stands up to take the call. "Hello?" he says uncertainly.

"Shane?"

Well, obviously. "Um, yeah."

"It's, uh. Gilbert. Comeau. I mean," Comeau exhales hard through his nose. "I… I just wanted to call and say, you know, congrats. You've been playing really well recently."

Shane makes eye contact with Ilya, who puts his hands out in a *Well?* gesture. He shakes his head at him. "Oh, thank you."

A long pause, long enough that Shane thinks he might have been hung up on. “So was that–”

“And that– oh, go ahead,” Comeau says at the same time.

“No, sorry, you go.”

“...Okay. Well, and that I’m rooting for you. You’re a great player and a good guy, even if we’re not on the same team anymore.”

Shane blinks hard. “I…thank you.”

He can hear muffled talking on Comeau’s end. “That’s it, I guess. I’ll see you around, Hollander.”

“See you,” Shane echoes, and then the call ends abruptly. He stares at his phone in bemusement.

“So?” Ilya says from behind him. “What did he want? Do I need to drive down to Montreal and kick his ass?”

“I don’t think so,” Shane says, still looking down. “He just said, like, that he wanted to congratulate me on how well I’ve been playing and that he’s rooting for me.”

“That’s it?”

Shane turns around. Whatever’s written on his face must be teetering toward pathetic, because Ilya tugs him in for a hug. He wonders if Comeau misses him at all, if that’s why he called. He wonders why he didn’t get to hear the words *I’m sorry*.

“How do you feel?” Ilya asks, arms tight around him. Shane breathes him in, the familiar musk of him, and takes stock of his body. His heart is beating fast, and his stomach is cramping.

But. He feels okay. It’s not forgiveness, or anything, but it’s nice. “He was thinking about me,” Shane says. “In, like, a positive way. I guess that’s all I can ask for.”

Ilya pulls back and examines him, but it’s not like he’s lying. Now that the initial confusion is gone, he’s a little lighter. Hopeful, maybe.

“Let’s finish the episode,” Shane says. “And then we can get back to what we were doing.”

Ilya brushes the back of his knuckle against Shane’s jaw. “He was

right."

"About?"

"You have been playing very well. A point-per-game. A nice goal today, thanks to me."

"Shut it," Shane says, but he's interested in where this is going.

"You played so well today, and everyday," Ilya says, big hands grabbing his waist. Shane is not delicate, not by any means, but Ilya makes him feel small. It's addicting. "I think you deserve a reward."

Shane's whole body lights up. He swallows hard, eyes drawn to Ilya's plush mouth, and leans in.

Everything in his life makes sense the moment their lips touch. His mouth opens underneath Ilya's, easy, tongues sliding together in that way that makes his blood heat. Ilya makes a little moaning sound, pushing forward, bodies flush. As if there's any way they could be closer. They make out for long, lazy minutes, until Shane tangles his fingers in Ilya's hair and tries to change the pace to something less leisurely and more urgent.

"Aw," Ilya hums condescendingly against his lips, Shane fruitlessly tries to grind up against the solid muscle of his thigh. "Desperate for it, Hollander?"

"Don't be an asshole," Shane says, gasping– and yes, he's desperate. A lot has changed since he was nineteen, but not this. Not this magnetism, this living, breathing bond between them, burning him out from the inside. He still needs it, goes crazy for it. Ilya kisses him slowly, greedily, and Shane whines. "Ilya. Come on."

"I like this," Ilya says wickedly– that damned smile. "I like making you wait."

A high, manic sound escapes his throat. "Fuck me. Please."

"Oh? You do not want to go slow?"

"Rozanov," Shane grits, and now he's really dizzy, cock straining painfully his jeans.

Ilya pulls away completely. He's the picture of cool and collected, save for the tent in his pants. Shane licks his lips, staring, as Ilya's hand

drifts towards his own crotch.

“You want?” he asks, accent thicker with arousal.

Shane nods. Yes, he wants it. He always wants it.

“Then we go slow. And you listen. And then you will get your reward.”

Fuck. “Okay,” he says, willing himself to calm down. “I’ll listen.”

Ilya appraises him. “Go sit on the bed.”

Shane does. He takes his shirt off while he’s at it, tossing it in the general direction of the hamper.

“Now pants.”

Shane takes off his pants. He sits naked, cock hard as a pole and already leaking furiously.

“No touching,” Ilya says, so Shane puts his hands behind his back, clenched into fists. Fuck. They haven’t even started and he’s unraveling. “You’re going to open yourself for me. Like Vegas. Don’t touch your cock.”

Oh, God. An exercise in discipline– Shane’s favorite kind. Ilya hands him the lube and watches his awkward shuffle up to the top of the bed. He’s still fully clothed, an echo of the Vegas night in question. It makes everything hotter: Shane, naked and wanting, versus Ilya, covered and calling the shots.

Shane adjusts his legs, splaying out to make himself comfortable, and exhales. He drags his fingers down the inside of his thigh, waking up his nerves, and circles his hole. He goes slow, at first, but before he knows it he’s rocking into it, fucking himself with two fingers as the bed begins to squeak. He can feel Ilya’s gaze burning into him, and it just makes him move faster, bouncing.

“Stop,” Ilya says, right as Shane gets into the rhythm. Shane stops, thighs trembling, pointer and middle finger shoved inside himself. His cock dribbles pre-come onto his stomach, red and weeping. He stays like that, spread open, until Ilya finally says, “Keep going.”

At three fingers: “Stop.” And then, a minute later: “Okay. Keep going.”

At four, an impossible stretch, Shane’s legs quivering: “Stop.”

Shane counts the seconds– one, two, three, four, five, six, but *God*– "Ilya," he warns. "Ilya, I'm close."

"No," Ilya says, still standing at the foot of the bed. "I think you can do it. One more minute."

"Please," Shane whispers, voice cracking. He has four fucking fingers up his own ass, but it's not enough to fill the ache inside of him. "Please, I need you."

Ilya closes his eyes for a long second, breathing in slowly. When he opens them again, his hand is unbuttoning his pants. Somewhere along the way he's lost his shirt– the muscles of his chest stand out in vivid contrast, crucifix gleaming in a nest of hair. "One more time, moya lyubimyy. You can do it. Keep going."

So Shane keeps going. He stretches, opening himself, trying to avoid brushing his prostate. He's so, so close, but he doesn't want to come like this– he wants to come split open on Ilya's cock, being fucked in the way that makes his restless mind go silent.

"Stop," Ilya commands, voice low.

Shane's hands are shaking. "*Ilya*," he whimpers.

"Good boy," says Ilya, taking pity. "Are you ready for your reward?"

"Yes," Shane breathes, flipping onto his stomach. He shifts his hips and parts his legs, knowing that Ilya will be able to see all of him, his hole no doubt pink and puffy from his own fingers. "I'm ready, I'm ready, come *on*, I need you in me."

"*Fuck*," Ilya bites out from behind him, and then he's being pulled by the hips to the foot of the bed, his husband's dick sliding into him in one smooth motion.

Shane groans, loud, as Ilya jackhammers into him, over and over and over, filling him up in the way no one else can. He cries out as Ilya fucks up against his prostate, hitting it every other thrust. "Ilya, fucking Christ. Oh, God, oh–"

"My sweet husband," Ilya pants from above him. "So obedient. This is what you wanted, yes?"

"Yes," Shane slurs, drooling onto the pillow. He might be crying. "Yes, fuck. Love you inside me. Love your dick."

Ilya laughs breathlessly and flips him onto his back. He drags him closer, holding Shane's legs over his broad shoulders, then bends him in half. Shane's not sure what sounds he's making anymore– not sure of anything but that perfect pressure, the electric heat pooling low in his belly.

Ilya's eyes, blazing, don't leave his face. "Gonna come for me, Hollander?"

"Yes, *God*, Ilya, fuck–"

"Touch yourself, sweetheart. You did so good."

"Ilya," Shane says, and it's the only word he can remember. He reaches down between his own legs, finally, *finally* touching his cock. Pleasure slices down his spine, sparking his blood. "Ilya, I–"

His release sweeps his legs out from under him, spurting up to his neck; he only dimly registers Ilya's praise, the hand brushing his sweaty hair away from his face. His ears are ringing.

"Perfect," Ilya says, voice awed. He's a vision himself, golden in every way– eyes, skin, hair. Shane grins up at his husband, chest heaving, and squeezes his core muscles. Ilya makes a punched-out noise, still hard inside him.

"Keep going," Shane says, meeting his eyes. The pupils are blown out; he looks wild, reverent, something else Shane can't put into words. Ilya wastes no time in thrusting back into him, the rhythm gone completely. Shane's mouth hangs open but he's soundless, folded in half with his legs in the air.

"Perfect," Ilya repeats, this time in Russian. "You're perfect. Every fucking time."

Shane's sensitive, bordering on painful, but he wants this, to be good for his husband, wants Ilya so fucking bad even in the middle of having him. He wants to see the glazed look in Ilya's eye, hear the rasp of his voice when he comes buried in Shane's body, where he belongs.

It doesn't take much longer. Maybe three thrusts and then Ilya's spilling into him, hot and messy, eyes shut as he tips forward and leans heavy on Shane, a solid weight.

"God," Shane says when he can speak again. He smooths a hand over

Ilya's broad back, soothing. "I love you. That was fucking amazing."

His husband hums, shifting a bit to lick at his nipple.

"Ilya," he admonishes, laughing. "I'm sensitive."

Ilya looks up at him mischievously. "I can't help it. You're beautiful."

He blushes, flustered by the directness of Ilya's words even after all these years. "I'm tired. I need to go to bed." And he's sticky in a way that's becoming extremely uncomfortable.

Ilya slides off of him, apparently sensing how antsy he's getting. "Alright. Let's clean up."

Shane sprawls out, listening to the water run in the bathroom. How can it ever get better than this? He used to be happy with seeing Ilya every month or two, and now he gets him everyday– his attention, his devotion. It seems impossible.

Ilya returns with warm cloths and wipes him down, lingering at his swollen entrance. Shane eventually hauls himself up to brush his teeth, but admittedly speeds through it, climbing into bed next to Ilya eagerly.

"Come here," Shane says, and curls into his heater of a husband. It's just not fair, how cold he gets in comparison. "Thank you for that."

A stubbly kiss is pressed to his shoulder. "You played amazing today. I want you to feel amazing."

"I love you," he says. His whole body aches, and he's already sinking into the mattress. "You played amazing, too. I can't wait to see you in the morning."

"Ya tebya lyublyu," Ilya whispers, and Shane closes his eyes.

-

Shane's not sure what he's expecting when he comes back from his morning run, but it's not Wyatt Hayes.

"Hey, Hollander," Wyatt says from their couch, controller in hand. Next to him, Ilya has his tongue peeking out of the corner of his mouth, concentrating on the Mario Kart displayed on their TV.

"Um, hi," Shane says. He stands there until Ilya shoots him a look,

like, *Why are you being weird?*

Shane shoots him a look right back that says, *I don't know leave me alone*, and then announces to the room at large: "I'm going to shower."

"Cool," Wyatt says, without looking at him. Ilya gives him a sarcastic thumbs up as he passes, so Shane swats his controller out of his hands.

"Hollander!" Ilya says, and Wyatt lets out a maniacal laugh as he presumably takes the lead.

His shower is much needed, and he lets himself relax into the warm spray, taking a little longer than usual. He ran seven miles, and he aches in a good way– plus his ass hurts from their other activities last night. When he comes out, Ilya and Wyatt have given up on Mario Kart and are instead hotly debating some album Shane's never heard of.

"He's a musical genius, dude. It's- it's experimental. It's *revolutionary*," Wyatt says.

"Don't care. Is bad," is Ilya's brilliant rebuttal. Wyatt throws his hands up in exasperation.

"You married this guy on purpose?" he asks Shane. "There weren't any nice guys in Montreal?" Ilya narrows his eyes at Wyatt as he simultaneously pulls Shane down toward him on the couch.

"You are being rude because you know I'm right," Ilya says, then directs his attention to Shane's damp skin. "You smell good. Did you use my body wash?"

"Maybe," Shane says, which means yes. Ilya's eyes turn hungry.

"Not sure I love this whole third-wheel vibe we seem to have established," says Wyatt. "Without my consent, I might add."

Shane flushes. "I really am sorry for the hotel thing."

"I'm not," Ilya smiles crookedly.

Wyatt barks a laugh. "Don't worry, Holly. I forgive you. It's your husband who sucks."

"He's difficult, isn't he," Shane says, and he and Wyatt share a grin over Ilya's offended noise.

Wyatt stays an hour or two longer, just shooting the shit, and it feels…easy. Familiar, like he's known him for a long time.

"I'll see you tomorrow," Wyatt says, and does a perfunctory bro-hug with Ilya, then Shane. "Good luck with this one, Hollander."

"Okay, fuck you, get out of my house now," Ilya says, and Shane laughs. The door swings shut and he looks over to see Ilya smiling at him, fond.

"What?" he asks, shy.

Ilya shrugs, and his own cheeks turn a little pink, a rare treat. "I like seeing you with the team. Sometimes it still feels like I am dreaming."

Shane stands on his toes to kiss Ilya's cheek. "You're not dreaming. Now come on, I want a smoothie."

"Are you going to put vegetables in mine again?"

"No," Shane lies. "I'm going to use our new blender, though."

"Okay, lzhets," Ilya says, and walks past him to the kitchen. "I knew what I was getting into when I married you."

Shane wrinkles his nose. "What's that one mean?"

Ilya rummages around in the fridge, taking out the low-fat yogurt and some kale. He pushes the greens across the counter toward Shane, winking. "Liar."

-

The problem with depression– of which there are many, obviously, but the one Shane seems to struggle most with– is that it's not something he can power through and make better for Ilya.

Everything good in his life he's worked for, which is not applicable at all to the situation. This is an endless, uphill battle, leaving him with manic energy and nothing to do with his hands while his husband lays silently in their bed for the second day in a row. Case in point– the fruit he's washing and cutting and organizing into bowls for Ilya, who literally did not ask for this at all. But it gives him something to do, and a reason to feel useful, and also hope that maybe Ilya will eat something other than pancakes today.

He's already swept, dusted, done laundry, done the dishes, meditated,

taken Anya for a walk, called his mom, called his dad, called Hayden, then Rose– and it's four pm. The rest of the day stretches out in front of him, intimidating and lonely without his usual partner.

He brings the little bowl of mango he sliced to their bedroom, trying to be quiet. Anya lays on their bed, her head on Ilya's thigh. It's the only time Shane lets her up there, so he's sure that despite the morose atmosphere she's enjoying it.

"Ilya," he says. His husband's breathing is so even he could be sleeping, but when Shane cards a hand through the curls he sees hazel eyes looking up at him tiredly. It hurts his heart to see the sadness there; he can't believe Ilya hid it for so long. It makes him feel, more than anything, like a failure. Ilya deserves better. "I cut you some fruit."

"What time is it?" Ilya asks. His voice is hoarse.

"Almost four."

"What fruit?"

"Mango."

Ilya sits up and takes the bowl. Shane's heart sings– victory! "Thank you. You do not need to wait on me. Go do something."

Shane has gone on two runs today. He can probably do a third.

"Not exercise," Ilya says, and now he's laying back down, pulling up the covers. It's an effective dismissal, so Shane squeezes his wrist and leaves the room.

His options are fairly limited. But…

He tries not to let himself overthink it. Before he knows it, he's calling Bood.

"Hollander!" Bood greets. "What's up, man?"

"Hey, Bood," Shane says, pacing the backyard like a chill, normal person. "Are you busy with Milo?"

Bood takes a second to respond. "I mean, I've got him with me, yeah. Why?"

"Nevermind," Shane says, but Bood's protests cut him off.

“No, man, what’s up? Cass is here too, it’s no problem.”

Spit it out, he wills himself, so he does. “Do you want to grab a coffee or something? Ilya’s not feeling great and I’m crawling out of my skin.”

He doesn’t realize he’s holding his breath until he exhales at Bood’s agreement– and just like that, the afternoon in front of him doesn’t seem so grim. “Great,” he says, smiling. “I know a place pretty close to us both.”

-

Ilya returns to the obnoxious man Shane knows him to be within the next few days, which Shane spends first getting coffee with Bood, then running together, and then going over to bounce Milo up and down on his lap. Cassie’s nice, too; it reminds him a little of hanging out with Jackie and Hayden. Plus, there’s a cute kid to look at when the conversation stalls out.

“Gold star for Shane Hollander,” Ilya says. “Making friends. I am happy for you.”

“Shut up,” Shane grouses. “I can make friends. It’s not, like, a hard thing to do.”

“You should try Barrett next,” Ilya muses, largely ignoring him. Shane sighs, but he’s just happy Ilya’s feeling up to tease him at all. He’d been so ecstatic to see him in good spirits that he’d even swallowed during his morning blowjob.

“I think I’ll pass on that,” he says, but it’s not really true. Barrett is growing on him, and to his surprise they have great on-ice chemistry– most of Shane’s goals are assisted by Troy. It’s the off-ice interactions that he needs to work on.

“I am glad you found something to do,” Ilya says in a more serious tone. “I mean it. I know I am not easy to be around when I get like that.”

Shane puts down the pillow he’d been shoving into the pillow case and gathers his thoughts into something coherent. “Ilya,” he says. “It’s not easy, but it doesn’t have anything to do with you. I know I’m, like, neurotic or whatever. And boring. I just feel like you do all this stuff for me, and put up with me, so it really sucks that I can’t do anything for you.”

Ilya grabs his chin and stares at him for a beat. “You help. And I do not have to put up with you any more than you put up with me.”

Shane smiles softly at him. “I love you.”

“I love you, too. But not when you yell at me about the dishes.”

Shane goes back to his pillow case, muttering, and perfectly willing to rehash the argument they had ten minutes prior. “You get water *everywhere*.”

“That is what washing is, Hollander.”

“Your *face* is washing.”

“If you can say that in Russian I will do it your way.”

Shane glares at him, sullen, but tries anyway. He rolls his eyes at the loud buzzer noise Ilya makes before he’s even done with the sentence.

“Fuck you,” he says, pressing his lips together so he doesn’t laugh.

“Maybe later,” Ilya says, twinkle in his eye. God, Shane missed that twinkle. “We have a dinner reservation to get to, and I have a very fussy husband.”

-

It’s not, like, a nice reservation.

It’s a table of ten hockey players and significant others at a casual Mexican restaurant, courtesy of Chouinard and his wife. The evening rush of diners has started to pack in, but it doesn’t take long to hear the boisterous laughter of their team. Ilya starts piledriving the salsa the moment they sit down, so Shane resigns himself to carrying the conversation for the next few minutes.

Thankfully, he doesn’t have to– moments after their arrival, the chair next to him is pulled back.

“Hello,” Luca Haas says, and they both turn to look at the young man standing in front of them, wringing his hands a bit. “Can I sit?”

“Of course,” Shane says. Hell will freeze over before he makes a younger teammate feel unwelcome. He remembers his sophomore year on the Voyageurs, and how it was somehow even more pressure than his rookie one. His captain had been there, a steady presence,

every step of the way.

Bood, across from them, starts pushing the salsa toward Haas before he's even fully seated. "Haasy, try this. I'm trying to test something."

Luca looks at it suspiciously, his nose wrinkling. "Is it hot?"

On Shane's other side, Ilya stifles a laugh. Bood glances at him, briefly, before turning back to Luca with a winning smile. "No."

Shane tries really, really hard not to laugh when Luca's face turns red and his nose starts running. Bood and Ilya have no such reservations, and poor Luca flushes even more in embarrassment when the entire table turns to see the commotion.

"Breathe through it, Haasy," Wyatt says from the end of the table.

"Atta boy," Harris laughs from next to him, and even Troy is smiling.

It's really not that hot. Barely even mild. Shane suspects Luca hasn't had much exposure to spicy dishes before, so anything above pepper might shock him. He pushes a glass of water toward the kid and ruffles his hair sympathetically.

Their waiter, who introduces himself as Daniel, takes their orders shortly after. He's charming, and makes the table laugh several times before taking off toward the kitchen. Shane pretends not to notice the once over he receives, and offers a polite media smile.

In the corner with his husband, Bood, Cassie, and Luca, the conversation is easy. He's comfortable with them, and has grown closer to Bood in the past few weeks. Bood and Ilya like to goad each other, and Ilya especially likes to hang the captaincy over Bood's head. It's cute, and also a reminder that Shane did marry a very obnoxious man– he's not the only one Ilya pesters.

Daniel returns with their food– mostly, Shane notes with amusement, fajitas– and when he sets Shane's plate down he gives him a wink. "Careful, it's hot."

"Got it," Shane says, ignoring the wink. Next to him, Ilya has gone a little tense, and Shane isn't surprised when a hand presses between his shoulder blades.

"He keeps looking at you," Ilya says, voice dropping a register.

“Well,” Shane says lightly, “that’s what people do with their eyes.”

“You want him to watch you?” Ilya asks, and now his hand is low on Shane’s back, a proprietary touch. Chaste to anyone watching, but still a tease. Why does he always have to do this in public? Shane works to steady his breathing, unwilling to embarrass himself in this Mexican restaurant. “I can go ask him to join us.”

Bood, Cassie, and Luca are all wisely pretending not to listen. Shane wonders when he stopped caring about Ilya touching him like this in front of people.

In front of friends.

“Don’t be a dick,” Shane rolls his eyes. He resolutely thinks of queso, morning breath, anything to make his skin stop singing from Ilya’s calloused hands. “He was being nice. He wants a good tip.”

“He made you laugh a lot.”

“He made everyone laugh. He’s pretty funny.”

“And you like funny guys?”

Shane turns to face him. Ilya’s tone is joking, but his eyes are heated, and his perfectly stubbled jaw is clenched. The answer, of course, is no. Shane doesn’t care about any guys, really, except for the one in front of him. But he wants to test something.

He’s not *that* oblivious.

“I like nice guys,” he says.

“No,” says Ilya, hazel eyes dark and turning darker. Shane knows Ilya can see right through him, but that only makes it more fun. He never claimed to have a poker face. “You don’t.”

Shane tweaks his ear, and soothes the sting with a quick kiss. “Shut up and eat your quesadillas, Rozanov.” *Before I embarrass myself*, he doesn’t say. Ilya seems to hear it all the same, and gives him a smirk. He does, though, shut up and eat his quesadillas. (Dousing them in sour cream, predictably. Ilya and his fucking sour cream).

The bill comes, which they split, and on Shane’s there is a phone number– rather boldly, he thinks in disapproval, considering it’s obvious he and Ilya are sharing it. He tips well anyway.

He knows Ilya sees it, but he doesn't say anything about it in the car on the way home. He doesn't say much of anything, really, talking about shallow subjects like the weather until they walk through their door and he's hauling Shane into the wall of the foyer.

It's scary how fast Ilya can get him to go from 0 to 100.

Ilya kisses him rough and needy, their mouths crashing together in a way that's almost painful. Shane moans as their tongues meet, caressing. He can't imagine anyone being a better kisser than Ilya Rozanov– filthy, all-consuming, adoring.

"I think I'll fuck you right here, against the wall," Ilya mutters, moving his mouth to the crook of Shane's neck. It feels like he can't get any air, skin hot and breath coming fast. "Fast and hard, just the way you like it."

"Ilya," Shane gasps, shivering at the wet, sucking heat on his exposed shoulder. He can't bring himself to care about the hickey.

"Gorgeous," Ilya says, deftly dealing with the buttons on Shane's jeans and pulling them down, and also procuring lube from somewhere. "You need it so bad."

Shane feels crazed, weightless, pinned against the wall like a bug. "I need it," he echoes. The angry head of his cock peeks out from the top of his boxers, and Ilya coos, rubbing a thumb over the slit. They both watch as a bead of pre-come is coaxed out of the tip.

"My little slut," Ilya says, in Russian, then he's hauling Shane's boxers down to his feet and shoving a slick finger into his hole. The noise Shane makes would be humiliating, but he's already flying too high to care, Ilya's long digit stretching and pressing unerringly on his prostate.

"Come on, give it to me," he moans after too many minutes of stretching, and Ilya listens, just as frenzied, apparently, lubing up his cock and sliding in with no finesse, no control (and damn, does Shane love it when Ilya Rozanov loses control).

It's– a lot. But it's so, so good, a pressure he craves, and Ilya's big enough that he's nailing Shane's prostate practically every time. Gravity's doing most of the work for them, but still– Shane is a two hundred pound man. Knowing that his husband is strong enough to pick him up and fuck him against the wall is doing something funny to his brain. He can't think, can't do anything but moan and writhe

and let this beautiful man fuck up into him over and over again.

“You were made for me, Shane,” Ilya grits out. He’s sweating, biceps straining. Shane’s cock bobs in the air, brushing against Ilya’s stomach and leaving a sticky mess behind. His back slides rough up and down the wall, painful, but so worth it. “Your ass, your noises. All of you.”

Shane keens, clenching down on Ilya’s dick. He *was* made for this. His body was made for Ilya’s own, fitting together like puzzle pieces. They’re just so good together. How could he ever resist it? How did he ever think he could go without this?

“Look how red you get,” his husband growls. His hair is a mess, a mop of damp curls. “From your cheeks to your cock. You are going to ruin me.”

He’s moved on to Russian, now, and Shane catches every other sentence, too far gone and Ilya’s words too garbled. This one, though, he understands: “Mine.”

“Yours,” Shane moans, thinly. “Yours, yours.”

He can’t hold on much longer. He has no idea how Ilya’s still holding him up, but his back is beginning to really hurt and the pressure inside of him is rising, a cresting wave, frying his synapses. “Fuck, I’m coming,” he warns, jacking himself in time of Ilya’s thrusts, and then he is, hard, whiting-out.

He comes to on the ground, Ilya leaning over him, kissing his temple. “Can I come on your face?” Ilya asks, breathlessly, and Shane pulls him down to kiss him, lust rocketing through him at the idea of Ilya claiming him.

“Yeah, fuck yes,” he whispers, and then Ilya’s straddling him, magnificent, strong hands moving relentlessly on his dick until he’s coming white and hot over Shane’s closed eyes, cheeks, mouth, moaning loudly. They sit there in silence, catching their breaths. Shane’s afraid to open his eyes.

“Yuck,” he says, and Ilya laughs a little.

“One second.”

He comes back shortly, gently wiping Shane’s face, kissing his brows and nosing at his cheeks.

“Hi,” Shane grins when he can see again. He decides to be chill and mop tomorrow instead of tonight.

“Hi,” Ilya says, and kisses him again. “I like you dirty.”

“You like me slutty.”

“Duh,” Ilya says. They’re still on the ground, and it’s beginning to get cold.

“That was…a lot. Fuck,” Shane says. “I’m sore already.”

“*You’re* sore?” Ilya grimaces, massaging his arms. “I do not need to go to gym for week now.”

Shane reaches out to feel up his husband’s biceps, giggling when Ilya flexes them. “Can we get off the floor now? I’m freezing.”

Ilya stands back up, stretching, and starts toward their bedroom.

“You’re not going to pick me up?” Shane asks from the ground. Ilya looks at him incredulously.

“I was literally just telling you I am sore. And you say *I* do not listen.”

Shane narrows his eyes. “I bet Daniel would pick me up.”

“It’s cute how you think that works,” Ilya says, but he does end up carrying Shane to bed, slapping his ass once for good measure.

“Is that yours too?” Shane laughs, and gets dumped on the covers for his troubles. He really should take a shower to rinse off. Maybe they'll watch an episode of their show they never bothered finishing.

“That part is especially mine.”

“Okay,” Shane says. He stretches, does a ten second count down, and forces himself to get up and start the water. He kisses Ilya's chin divot as he passes. “As long as we agree that you’re mine.”

“Yes, moy vozlyublenniy,” Ilya says, in Shane’s favorite soft, fucked-out voice of his. His face turns up to the kiss like a flower in the sun. “I am yours.”

It’s so nice when they’re on the same page.

-

He and Barrett are clicking.

He hears Wyatt curse and then he's being clapped on the back by his teammates. He skates around to Barrett and they watch as the new lines go, Wyatt shutting them out.

"Nice pass," he says, and Barrett gives him a small smile.

"You made it pretty easy."

"Look at that," Dykstra says from behind them. "Beautiful hockey, boys. I'm a bit jealous."

They're still on a winning streak. Shane wants to see how far they can stretch it before it snaps, and he's feeling cautiously optimistic. He and Barrett are a force together, and he and Ilya, when on the power play, are something else entirely. Everyone has been pulling their weight– even Dillon, who netted a goal last game. It's a tad difficult, knowing when to use his seniority and knowing when to stay silent. He and Ilya had got into a bit of a tiff in the locker room over running a play, and Shane had pulled the Voyageurs Captain card. It had worked, and he had been right, but it wasn't something he'd thought he would be able to do.

Wiebe had pulled him aside after.

"Hollander," he'd started, and Shane had anticipated a dressing down for disagreeing with the captain, or getting into a lovers' quarrel. But Wiebe had surprised him. "You should speak up more," he said. "The boys listen to you, and you have good things to say."

Truthfully, it had been what he needed to hear– that he was in a place where he could contribute to the team outside of just his skill. That they wanted to listen to him, and Ilya wouldn't take offense (well, too much offense) over him disagreeing. It was a game changer.

The whistle blows, signaling the end of practice. Shane listens to Wiebe's breakdown in the huddle, and when the boys separate to trudge into the locker room, he hangs back as he always does. Wyatt slaps his back on his way out, and Bood gives him a faux-stern look. "Don't work yourself to death, Holly," he says, before following the team into the tunnel.

Shane stares out at the now-empty rink. He loves this sport. And he thinks he could love this team. He already does, really.

“Ready?” Ilya asks from behind him. They’re the last two on the ice. As usual.

“It’s gonna be good,” Shane informs him. They’re only going to get better. They’re going to extend their streak, and make the playoffs. They’re going to win the fucking cup. He looks up and Ilya’s beaming, face crinkled and genuine and gorgeous. And God, the excitement Shane feels is reflected in those eyes. He’s so lucky.

“The season?”

“The season. The rest of our lives. All of it,” Shane says.

And then he knocks the puck away from Ilya, and takes off in a sprint toward the goal.

“That’s dirty, Hollander,” he hears from behind him, closing in, and he can’t help but let out a breathless laugh, shooting into the empty net seconds before all 6’3 of his captain slams him into the boards, pressing him into the glass with an immovable grip. The laugh turns into a hitched breath as Ilya leans in, unrelenting, and Shane’s not proud of what’s about to happen but he’s been doing this dance too long to bother to try and fight it.

He’s right where he needs to be. And it’s going to be so, so good.

Chapter End Notes

ilya when a man stares at shane: haha yeah my husband’s hot
ilya when a man makes shane laugh: [kill bill sirens]

a few things, because i cannot stop talking ever:
1. ilya has wyatt, shane has bood. they share troy but shane does not want custody
2. there is literally no way every single montreal player hates shane. just, like, realistically– they played with him for over a decade, and he captained them to three cups. sure, montreal fans will curse his name forever, but i think eventually some of the player bonds will be repaired. even if it’s slow going
3. wyatt is the permanent third wheel because it’s funny
4. they win the stanley cup :) and live happily ever after

…and with that, it’s done! my brain wanted a silly story about shane, but my heart wanted a rumination on the aftermath of public spectacle, finding out people’s love for you is conditional, and being the best but still having to prove yourself anyway. this

ended up being about 70/30 because i love him too much to make him sad. as usual, i live for feedback & knowing you enjoyed my work, so any comments and/or kudos are beloved, treasured, etc. i have a few more ideas for these boys rattling around in my brain, so this isn't the last of me! <333

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!